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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF GREAT WRITERS
FROM SHAKESPEARE TO TENNYSON

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BY

R. FARQUHARSON SHARP

ILLUSTRATED WITH FACSIMILES FROM AUTOGRAPH MSS.

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PREFACE.

In the following sketches an endeavour has been made to give an impression of the personality of each author in the course of a succinct biographical narrative,—to disentangle the man himself from the mass of biographical detail that surrounds him.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

Facsimile of Autograph Signature from Shakespeare's Will. [*Face page* 1.

I.

SHAKESPEARE.

IT is only when we attempt to appreciate them as ordinary men, living and working as men of our own ken do to-day, that we realise how much our conceptions of the greatest figures in history are coloured by a tendency to consider them as set apart from the affairs of everyday life. This is more noticeably so in the case of Shakespeare than in that of any other name in English literature, partly owing to the limited material we possess as a ground for our knowledge of his life, and mainly from the degree in which his greatness overshadows that of any of his fellows in his art. Overwhelming greatness such as his is apt, especially after a lapse of three centuries, to surround a man with a halo of unreality; so much so, that it probably comes to most of us as a new point of view to regard him in the light of an unassuming and industrious worker, with a prosaic father and ordinary brothers and sisters, conscious of his powers but unconscious of their unique excellence, and most humanly anxious as to the material results of a prosperous career. The more we become acquainted with what record we have of his life, the nearer he is brought to us; all that we know of him tends to this; at the same time the more intimate knowledge of the man does not any whit detract from our reverence for the supreme genius.

The name of Shakespeare was a common one in the Midlands in the sixteenth century, particularly in Warwickshire. William Shakespeare's father was a "general dealer" in Stratford-on-Avon, trafficking in country produce of various kinds. Aubrey calls him "a butcher"; eventually, perhaps, his business may have become narrowed down to that. The date of the poet's birth was the 22nd or 23rd April, 1564. He was his parents' third child. Two daughters, Joan and Margaret, had preceded him in the family, and after him came three sons and two daughters. Their numbers were somewhat of an embarrassment to their father, whose liabilities increased simultaneously with the growth of his family; and it was fortunate both for him and for his sons that the latter would gain excellent free education at the Stratford Grammar School. There William Shakespeare battened upon such knowledge as came in his way—it was probably mainly in the direction of the Latin classics—until his father's growing monetary difficulties led to the boy's withdrawal from school, when only thirteen, to help in the family business. This, no doubt, pleased his boyish dignity as eldest son; and it may have been partly owing to this somewhat untimely promotion to man's estate that he undertook, when scarcely nineteen, the responsibilities of matrimony. Anne Hathaway, whom he married, was the daughter of a farmer in a neighbouring village, and was some eight years older than her precocious husband. Whether their union was productive of happiness does not clearly appear; but it has been suggested that Shakespeare's insistence, in more than one passage in his works, on the wisdom of a woman's taking to husband "an elder than herself" seems to point rather ominously to the

fact that their disparity of years was not without its probable results as far as domestic happiness was concerned. A daughter was born to them in 1583, and twins (a boy and a girl) in 1585.

In 1586 Shakespeare went, without his wife, to seek his fortune in London. It is possible that this may have been in consequence of his traditional complicity in a poaching affray in the park of Sir Thomas Lucy, a justice of the peace, who is almost certainly satirised in the "Justice Shallow" of *Henry IV.* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* Be that as it may, Shakespeare gravitated at once to the theatre, which was to be the centre of his life's activity. A natural aptitude for acting gained him admission to a prominent troup of strolling actors that eventually became the Lord Chamberlain's (and ultimately, through James I.'s favour, the King's) "licensed company of players"; and in a few years' time the future dramatist was acknowledged as one of its leading members. There he numbered among his friends the famous Richard Burbage, who, with his colleagues, John Heming and Henry Condell—afterwards the editors of the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays—became his staunch ally. In the last year of the sixteenth century the Globe Theatre, on the Bankside, was built and opened by Burbage; and this was not only the scene of Shakespeare's best efforts as an actor, but was the house associated with the production of all his dramas till his retirement in 1611. He had a share in the fortunes of the theatre; and probably half his income, which in his later years was considerable, was derived from its receipts.

During some years before the opening of the Globe Theatre he had been gaining a rapidly growing repu-

tation as a dramatist. Francis Meres, who wrote a treatise on literature in 1598, speaks of him as one of the greatest men of letters of his day, and as "the most excellent among the English" for the writing of both tragedy and comedy. The precise dates of the production of Shakespeare's plays is necessarily a matter of uncertainty; but there is little doubt that by the time Meres wrote, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry VI.*, *Richard III.*, *Richard II.*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *King John*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Henry IV.* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* had all been produced, and *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece* and the *Sonnets* written.

The plays, which averaged two a year, were the product of the best twenty years of his life, 1591 to 1611; and his most mature works, from *Much Ado About Nothing* to *The Tempest*, were the outcome of the last ten years of his association with the Bankside Theatre. There is no more eloquent testimony to the immediate reputation he made than the fact that it became a lucrative trick of piratical publishers to palm off inferior work upon the public as Shakespeare's.

Like other successful dramatists who have succeeded him, Shakespeare was in the best sense an opportunist, in that he in many cases appropriated for the plots of his dramas stories that were already familiar to his public, so transmuting them, however, by his art into "something rich and rare" that the plays became entitled to all the merit of new creations. It is very probable that in the earlier days of his career his obvious genius was given employment by the managers of theatres in revising and shaping the plays of others.

In his own plays he was at first greatly influenced, as was but natural, by the most pronounced styles of his time, his conspicuous models being Marlowe and Lyly. The ingenious juggling with words and fantastic flights of metaphor that are to be found in Shakespeare's earlier plays are due to Lyly's influence. That worthy (who also wrote some comedies) had become famous by means of an artificial romance named *Euphues*, which was published in 1579; and the manufacture of "Euphuisms" (as, in consequence, were called the verbal gymnastics and hair-splitting dialectics of which he set the fashion) was regarded as among the highest efforts of talent. Marlowe's influence upon Shakespeare was of greater importance. His work was as full of sincerity as Lyly's was the reverse, and, both in the nobility of its conceptions and the grandeur of its diction, far more worthy of imitation. That Shakespeare was conscious of this debt is shown by his incidental allusion to Marlowe in *As You Like It*, where Phebe says:—

> "Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might,
> 'Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?'"

the second line being a quotation from Marlowe's poem "Hero and Leander".

Shakespeare was not long, however, in forming his own style, assimilating what was best in his models and discarding their extravagances. No better proof of this can be found than in a comparison of the workmanship of *Romeo and Juliet* with that of *Love's Labour's Lost*, which only preceded it by a year; while in *Henry VI.*, which ushered in the splendid series of historical plays, he showed that he had definitely found a firm bottom upon which to build his noble edifice of drama.

For the greater part of the year 1593 the London theatres were closed; and it is probable that during this interval Shakespeare toured in the country with his company, under the protection of his patron the Earl of Southampton. We may suppose that the players travelled with a repertory of plays whose popularity was established, thus affording the dramatist leisure for work; for during that year and the year that followed he wrote *Richard III.*, *Richard II.*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Venus and Adonis*, *Lucrece*, and very probably some of the *Sonnets*. The latter were certainly not printed when they were written, but circulated among his friends in manuscript; an edition of them was surreptitiously published in 1609 by an enterprising printer who had been able to lay his hands upon the necessary copies. With *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, however, Shakespeare made a deliberate bid for the favour of the reading public.

Within ten years of his going to London he had not only made for himself a name amongst men of letters, and won an assured popularity with his audiences; he had also received what was, in the days when so much went by favour, the valuable seal of Court approbation of his work, in the shape of the royal command that his plays were to be given before the queen. Consequently we find him acting before Elizabeth at Christmas, 1594; and from that time till the queen's death his plays were frequently performed at Court entertainments. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was written at the command of the queen, who, after seeing *Henry IV.*, desired Shakespeare to depict Falstaff in love; and tradition has it that, in deference to Elizabeth's impatience, *The Merry Wives* was finished in fourteen days.

That the queen's admiration for his genius was sincere may be inferred from the fact that her patronage of him was not interrupted even by so dangerous an incident as that which occurred in connection with a famous revival of *Richard II.* in 1601. This was on the occasion of an attempted insurrection for which the Earl of Essex was responsible. The earl had failed in a mission upon which he had been sent to Ireland, and so had lost the royal favour and forfeited his power with his position. In the vain hope of recovering these, he tried to foment a rebellion in London ; and it was at this juncture that the rebel leaders instigated a revival of *Richard II.* at the Globe Theatre, with the idea that its forcible picture of the murder of a king would stir up the evil passions of the mob.

This device of the earl's adherents was commented upon at his trial ; but, to the queen's credit, the fact was not allowed to weigh with her in her admiration for the author of the play so disastrously chosen, and to the end of her reign she showed him marked favour. After her death her successor continued this by granting a royal patent to the Lord Chamberlain's company of players, of whom Shakespeare had long been one.

Of his intercourse with other prominent men of letters of his time there is frequent record, and his convivial meetings with Ben Jonson and other kindred spirits at the Mermaid Tavern are traditional. An often cited passage relating to this in Fuller's *History of the Worthies of England*, written some fifty years after Shakespeare's death, will bear quotation again. "Many were the wit-combats," says Fuller, "betwixt him and Ben Jonson, which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war;

Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning, solid but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all the tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention."

In the meantime, while Shakespeare's fame and prosperity were increasing, his father's affairs at Stratford were going from bad to worse ; and to the remedying of this Shakespeare, like a dutiful son, set himself. He apparently returned to Stratford in 1596, and at once took measures to set his father's and his family's fortunes upon a better footing. His father had been obliged to retire from his trade, entangled on every side in litigation and monetary difficulties ; but no sooner did his famous son come to his assistance than a change was effected. This was, moreover, not merely owing to the dramatist's prestige, though that no doubt went for something. Shakespeare must by this time have been in the enjoyment of a very comfortable income (probably equal in purchasing power to at least £1,000 a year of our money) derived from his plays and the sale of his poems, in addition to liberal gifts from his generous patron the Earl of Southampton ; and so he was well able to help his father. He was, too, a good man of business, which literary men as a rule are not ; and in his prosperous days seemed almost to court litigation where it offered any prospect of advantage to the family interests or honour.

As if once and for all to settle his position in Stratford, he bought, in 1597, the most imposing house in the town. This house, known as "New Place," had been built a couple of generations earlier by a local magnate, and had been allowed to fall into disrepair.

Shakespeare spent considerable sums in restoring it, and by this and other means established a substantial position for himself as householder in his native town. His anxiety to do this—the manifest outcome of an honest jealousy for his family's honour—is a curious side evidence of his modesty with respect to his own reputation as a dramatist. Many a less distinguished man would have affected disdain of local reputation as compared with fame amongst men of letters in London ; but Shakespeare's character seems from first to last to have been marked by an unassuming simplicity, as if he were unconscious of the position contemporary judgment already assigned to him.

He did not reside at New Place till some years later, when he retired from the theatre ; in the meantime he added gradually to his property in Stratford. His father's death in 1601 brought him such inheritance as the family's creditors had not diverted ; and he enlarged this by purchases of land, houses and tithes. It is remarkable that these and similar transactions, including some tiresome pieces of litigation, took place during the period when his powers as a dramatist were finding their completest expression. This many-sided man could energetically prosecute prosaic matters of business while his dramatic genius produced so glorious a series of works as *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Cymbeline*, *A Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, all of which were written between 1599 and 1611.

In the latter year Shakespeare probably severed his active connection with the Globe Theatre, and also with the theatre at Blackfriars in which he had held a

small share ; though he no doubt continued from time to time to superintend performances of his plays both at these houses, and at Court, where they were frequently "commanded". For the remaining five years of his life his home was mainly made at Stratford. He bought a house at Blackfriars, near the theatre, in 1613, but probably leased it and never occupied it himself.

At Stratford he adopted his gradually acquired position of local magnate, and there spent his remaining years (as Nicholas Rowe tells us) "in ease, retirement, and the conversation of his friends, as all men of sense will wish theirs may be". His counsel or his aid was frequently invoked in matters of local dispute, and he seems to have entered conscientiously into his new *rôle* of landed proprietor, while his domestic affairs called for careful and detailed attention.

At the beginning of the year 1616 his health began to fail ; and on 23rd April he died, and was buried two days later in Stratford Church. A certain William Hall, who visited Stratford in 1694, has left it on record that the charnel house (where the bones dug from graves in the church and churchyard were unceremoniously heaped together to make room for others) was close by the church ; and that it was to work upon the superstitious fears of successive sextons, and prevent their disturbing Shakespeare's remains, that the following lines were set above his place of burial :—

> Good friend, for Jesus sake forbeare
> To dig the dust enclosed heare ;
> Bleste be the man that spares these stones,
> And curst be he that moves my bones.

Shakespeare's nature seems to have been gentle and kindly ; "sweet Master Shakespeare," a contemporary

poet called him. His friend Ben Jonson's words bear this out, and show, moreover, that he was conspicuous for straightforwardness in all his dealings. "I loved the man," wrote Jonson, "and do honour his memory, on this side idolatry, as much as any. He was, indeed, honest and of an open and free nature." Unassuming and simple, he lived honestly and worked hard, delighted with his success inasmuch as it was in work that lay nearest his heart, but also because it enabled him to make good provision for his children. We can easily understand the charm such a nature exercised on his friends. He cannot but have realised the fame he had made for himself, and have gloried in it, as much for its own sake as for what it brought to him ; but nothing seems to have been more foreign to his disposition than any tendency to self-assertiveness.

What his relations with his wife actually were we cannot tell. The accepted tradition is that there was never much sympathy between them, and there are indications that this may have been so. At her death, however, her daughters erected a memorial tablet to her in Stratford Church, where she was buried near her husband, with an epitaph whose wording is full of affection. It is more than possible that age softened her asperities and enlarged her sympathies ; and that in the autumn of Shakespeare's life she and he were good friends. Much has quite unnecessarily been made of the scanty mention of her in his will ; it is more than likely that, as a recent biographer of Shakespeare suggests, her age and ignorance of affairs led him to entrust her interests after his death to his eldest daughter, who evidently inherited some of his own shrewdness in matters of business.

Of the thirty-eight plays usually included in the collective editions (his authorship of two amongst them —*Henry VIII.* and *Titus Andronicus*—being more than doubtful) only sixteen are known to have been published in his lifetime, and these probably not at his own instigation. *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* are the only two works he himself caused to be published. The separate plays were printed, by more or less unscrupulous printers, probably from MS. copies surreptitiously obtained or made from the theatre "prompt books". This fact—added to the occasional carelessness of printers in days when "proofs" were unknown, and the circumstance, so much bewailed by the editors of the earliest collected edition of the plays, that Shakespeare himself had been at so little pains to preserve true and unmutilated copies of his works —accounts for the frequent inaccuracies and corrupt readings that have crept into the text of many of the plays. The editors of the first folio, John Heming and Henry Condell, say in their preface that "it had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to have been wished, that the author himselfe had liv'd to have set forth and overseen his own writings"; but that, since it had been ordained otherwise, they had "so published them as, where before you were abus'd with diverse stolne and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stelthes of injurious impostors that exposed them, even those are now offered to your view cur'd and perfect of their limbes".

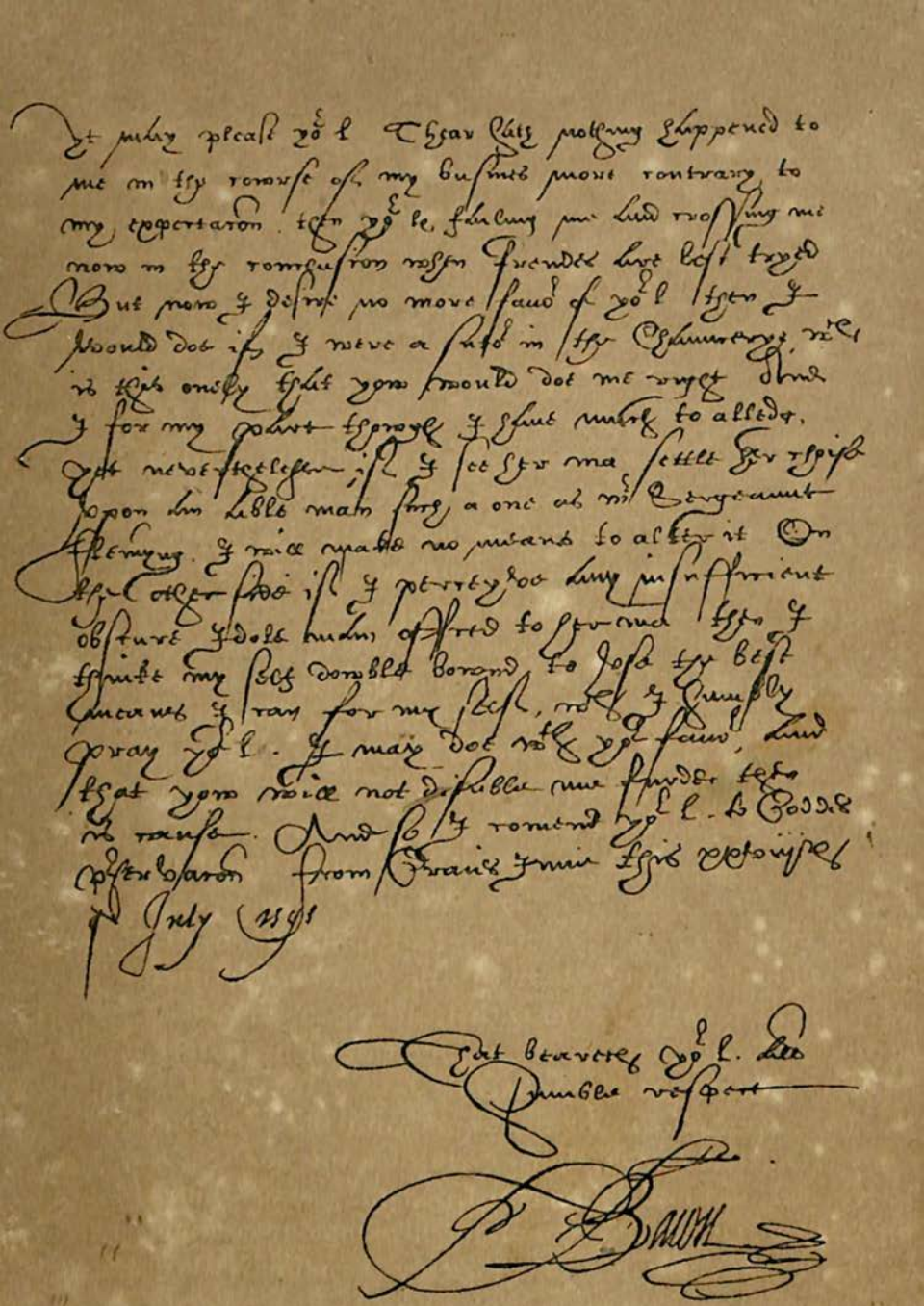
To these pious friends of Shakespeare, who did this work, as they themselves wrote, "without ambition either of self-profit or fame, but only to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow as our Shakespeare alive," the world owes a debt whose

extent it is not easy to estimate. What the world would have lost had they not used such loyal diligence we fortunately know. Thanks to them we have this priceless possession; a possession whose value can never change, for it includes all knowledge as far as man's character is concerned. No dramatist, of this or any other nation, has had so complete a grasp of life, so sane and comprehensive a view of the unchanging characteristics of human nature. Added to this is the varied beauty and majesty of his verse, and his unfailing sense of the dramatic. It has probably happened to every student of Shakespeare, on seeing the plays performed, to be surprised at the effectiveness upon the stage of scenes which he had deemed undramatic, or at the significance that passages which he passed over as irrelevant acquired when spoken upon the boards. This is a tribute to Shakespeare the dramatist. To Shakespeare the thinker the best monument is in the fact that his characterisation applies to all time. He knew the world of men and women through and through, and his creations seem real to us for the reason that in them he depicted human nature as he saw it, clear and evident through whatever trappings of circumstance enfolded it.

His intercourse with men of letters in London, and, no doubt, access to such books of reference and information as then existed, enabled him to amass a surprising amount of miscellaneous knowledge. A fair classical education in his youth had trained a mind whose alertness enabled him to assimilate what he read in the most profitable manner, and to select and retain what was most useful to him. The very slips he occasionally makes are such as would inevitably

occur in the case of one who produced his work with such prolific rapidity.

It is difficult to speak with patience of the theory, based mainly upon the most fantastic foundations and the shallowest reasoning, that the plays we know as Shakespeare's were in reality written by Francis Bacon. Setting aside the aimlessness of such concealment on Bacon's part, and the mass of contemporary evidence that Shakespeare was the author of the plays, it may be at any rate said with confidence that it is scarcely credible that the supporters of the theory can have made themselves acquainted with such verse as Bacon wrote, or with the general tenour of Bacon's views of life and personal conduct. Bacon was the most profound philosopher and the greatest prose writer of his day; but he was emphatically not a poet, and neither his writings nor the record of his life show his personality as in any way identical with that of the mighty poet who "was not of an age, but for all time"



FRANCIS BACON.

Facsimile (reduced) of a Letter to the Lord Keeper, complaining of the latter's failure to support Bacon's suit for the Office of Solicitor-General (28th July, 1595). (Brit. Mus., Harley MS. 6,997, f. 72.)

[*Face page* 15.

II.

BACON.

AMONG the prominent Englishmen of history there is none whose personality is made up of more apparently irreconcilable contradictories than Francis Bacon's. His character has been a constant problem to his biographers, and the task of forming an estimate of it a continual difficulty; and although this has been rendered easier by the laborious research of both advocates and detractors, it is difficult to gain a clear impression of the real nature of this man, who could be at once an affectionate and a disloyal friend; who could condescend to the depths of subservience to win favour from the great, and yet hold a lofty idea of his own aloofness from all that was mean; who could profess (and apparently believe that he followed) the highest ideals of conduct, and in the end be convicted of flagrant venality; and, with it all, be possessed of strong personal charm, and, on one side of his nature, nobility and sincerity of thought.

The circumstances of his youth, and the profound conviction that he was born to fulfil a mission whose successful accomplishment justified the use of almost any means, go far to account for his singular conduct of life. Born of parents in high position (his father, Nicholas Bacon, was for twenty years Lord Keeper to Elizabeth), he was given a liberal education culminat-

ing in three years' residence at Cambridge, and, after that, a sojourn in France under the protection of the English ambassador. In 1579, when Bacon was only eighteen, his father's sudden death called him back to England, to find that he could claim but a small inheritance. His father had delayed till too late the purchase of an estate which was to have been provision for his son's future, and so it became necessary for Bacon to adopt some profession by which he could hope to gain a sufficient income.

He had already become remarkable to his intimate friends by his ability of mind, which very early showed a bent towards philosophic inquiry, particularly in the direction of natural philosophy. As early as this he seems to have realised, or to have convinced himself, that the pursuit of philosophy was to be the goal of his endeavours. In the meantime, however, he must find a more prosaic profession, in order to gain the necessary independence which only an adequate income would bring him. His uncle, Lord Burghley, was unsuccessful in an attempt to get him a post at Court, and so the Law was chosen as a career. After two years' study he was called to the Bar, and a little later entered Parliament, where he sat as member for various constituencies between 1584 and 1598.

In the hope that legal distinction would assist him to some high office of state, he made definite choice of a political career, expecting (as he says in the preface to a philosophical work published in 1603) that "if he held some honourable office in the state he might thus secure helps and supports to aid his labours, with a view to the accomplishment of his destined task". This "destined task" he took to be the reformation of the

existing methods of philosophical inquiry. In later years he professed to regret this choice of a public career as the greatest mistake of his life, on the ground that he had wasted in politics abilities that should have been given to science ; but it is significant that this regret came at a time when events must have shown him that, as a statesman, he had over-reached the mark in the matter of place-seeking, whilst the philosopher in him had been injured by the fact that the struggle for advancement, originally desired merely as procuring means of independence, had bred a love for position and power for their own sakes.

On the Attorney-Generalship falling vacant in 1593 Bacon was extremely anxious to gain the post, and his warm friend the Earl of Essex strained every nerve to support his suit. It was unsuccessful; however, and before very long Bacon's financial position, in spite of generous aid from Essex, became distressing. He was, it is true, one of the Queen's Counsel, but the position carried no salary with it ; and apparently no public office could be found for him. He endeavoured, in 1597, to bolster up his fortunes by means of a marriage with a wealthy widow ; but here his hated rival Coke, who had just been appointed Attorney-General instead of Bacon, again supplanted him by marrying the lady in question ; and the following year Bacon was exposed to the indignity of an arrest for debt. The Earl of Essex's assistance was failing him, for their relations were now by no means as friendly as they had been. The evidently treasonable designs of Essex after the collapse of his mission to Ireland had probably extorted strong protest from Bacon, who, partly from political conviction and still

more from self-interest, was a staunch partisan of the queen. Much has been made by some historians of Bacon's disloyalty to his friend at this crisis, it being maintained that when he was offered a brief as prosecuting counsel at the earl's trial (which followed in 1601) he accepted it, in disregard of all that Essex had done for him, for the reason that he knew if he refused it he would lose all chance of royal favour. It is not to be denied that the idea of losing ground at Court was intolerable to Bacon ; but we cannot, in the face of the "apology" for his action which he published some three years later, entirely refuse to credit him with a certain measure of political sincerity in the matter, however ugly his attitude appears in the light of his previous relations with Essex.

Bacon has been described as a man of tremendous mental power, but little moral sense. This is probably too sweeping a statement ; but it may fairly be said that a robuster sense of honour would have caused him, if not to stand by his former benefactor, at any rate to refrain from actively attacking him, even though he believed him guilty. It was, too, as events proved, a somewhat useless imperilling of his reputation and self-respect ; for Elizabeth after all did very little for him during the two remaining years of her reign. Bacon, however, was a person of remarkable self-complacency, and apparently found no difficulty in persuading himself that his course of conduct was not only justifiable, but admirable. His shifts to gain the royal favour were, after all, those common to a time when every kind of intrigue to that end was unblushingly indulged in ; and in his case there was always his chronic impecuniosity acting as a spur behind it all.

Previous to these disturbing events, Bacon had, in 1597, published the first edition of the famous *Essays*. In its first form the volume only comprised ten essays, the subjects of some of them—"Followers and Friends," "Suitors," "Expense," "Honour and Reputation"—being obviously prompted by his own experiences at the time. A second edition, issued in 1612, was greatly enlarged and contained forty essays ; and in the third and final edition (1625), which contained fifty-eight, Bacon claims that he has not only added to their number, but has rewritten some of them, "so that they are indeed a new work". The *Essays* undoubtedly bear the strongest impression of his personality. Their burden is not merely meditation on lofty themes, but practical advice to men living in an imperfect world. They reflect his appreciation of virtuous and noble conduct as theoretically the most excellent thing in the world, and at the same time his shrewdness in observing that, as he says in the essay of "Boldness," "there is in human nature more of the fool than of the wise," and that the prudent man is he who sets himself to take advantage, as honourably as may be, of the defects of others.

Elizabeth's death left Bacon in considerable doubt as to what would be his prospects of advancement under the new king. At first it seemed as though he were to be entirely left out in the cold. His position as "learned counsel" to the Crown was continued, it is true ; but beyond that he was in no way distinguished by the royal favour until, in July, 1603, he received the somewhat doubtful honour of knighthood among a batch of 300 judges, counsel, serjeants-at-law, gentlemen ushers, and others.

Three years later he married. His wife, Alice Barn-

ham, was the daughter of an alderman ; "an handsome maiden, to my liking," he wrote to one of his relations. Practically nothing is known of their married life. In the following year he was appointed Solicitor-General ; and eventually, in 1613, after much contriving and much urging of his suit, he gained the long-desired position of Attorney-General, having succeeded in getting his rival Coke promoted to a Chief Justiceship. These first ten years of the king's reign had been full of unobtrusive political activity on Bacon's part. He was untiring in his efforts to affirm the king's supremacy over Parliament, and the necessity for the royal prerogative—hoping, no doubt, thereby to impress the king with his zeal as a loyalist, for he frankly admitted that the desire for self-aggrandisement was the mainspring of all his actions. How he justified the desire, and its influence on his life, we have already seen.

He had been busy with his pen, and now found leisure to give attention to his beloved philosophy as well as to political writing. *The Advancement of Learning* (which may be considered as the first instalment of his system of philosophy) had appeared side by side with pamphlets on political and religious topics, his *Apology* for his conduct in the case of the Earl of Essex, and various other ephemeral productions. He had also made progress with the further planning of the great philosophical scheme that was to be his *magnum opus*. This occupied him, roughly speaking, from 1608 to 1620, when the *Novum Organum* was published ; and during the last seven years of this period he published nothing, but gave to the preparation of that volume all the time he could spare from the duties of his new position. Previously to his gaining the Attorney-Generalship he had written the fragmentary account of an

Ideal State which, shortly after his death, his chaplain published with the title of *The New Atlantis*. With this we may imagine Bacon as employing himself from time to time as a relaxation from the severity of political or philosophical writing.

Assiduous court paid to the king's most recent favourite, George Villiers, resulted in Bacon's receiving the coveted Chancellorship on the resignation of Lord Ellesmere in March, 1617. For some months Bacon's title was restricted to that of "Lord Keeper"; but at the beginning of 1618 Villiers' elevation to the Marquisate was accompanied by Bacon's promotion to full title and emoluments as Lord Chancellor. In July of the same year he was created Baron Verulam. For three years he basked in the full sunshine of prosperity. His position was, as he thought, unassailable; and he took care to strengthen it by systematically playing into the hands of those who could further his interests. Conspicuous in this connection is the eager part he took in the prosecution of the Earl of Suffolk and Sir Henry Yelverton. Both of these had stood in Villiers' way, or had come into collision with him, and therefore must be disgraced. In the case of Yelverton, who had succeeded Bacon as Solicitor and Attorney-General and proved himself a valuable friend in the Chancellor's less fortunate days, Bacon's conduct is particularly ungrateful; and the vindictiveness of the letter in which he acquaints Villiers with the result of the trial is most unpleasing.

In the midst of this busy and unlovely political life comes the strange contrast of the publication of the *Novum Organum*, a work pregnant with close reasoning, and one that admittedly had a marked influence on the development of natural science. Though Bacon

was undoubtedly greater as an abstract philosopher than as a man of science, he did the highest service to natural philosophy by insisting on the necessity for a patient and accurate knowledge of facts as a preliminary to deducing theories from them. In the science of his day observation was of little account. Ingenious reasoning there was in plenty ; but it was based either upon carelessly noticed or ill-ascertained facts, or upon mere conjecture. It was in combating this unscientific procedure that the value of his work lay.

The projected *Instauratio Magna*—the great system of which all his philosophical work was intended to form part—was, had he lived to complete it, to have constituted a new and perfect method for the interpretation of nature in all its aspects, both physical and metaphysical. Ambitious as was his aim in this, and noble as is the language in which his philosophical speculations are couched, he attracts us more when he is content to be the shrewd student of human nature and the vicissitudes of everyday life—the Bacon of the *Essays*.

He touched the highest point of his career at the beginning of the year 1621, when he was created Viscount St. Alban. It is somewhat remarkable that his influence upon the policy of the king's party was not greater than it was. In spite of his obvious lack of disinterestedness, he was undoubtedly the most able public man of his day ; but, perhaps from the very reason that he had too clearly shown his hand as a courtier, his counsel seems to have been rarely followed by the king except when it coincided with the monarch's own. Nemesis was, however, lying in wait for him. The Parliament were impatient of his political attitude, recognising his importance as a backer of the king's

policy even if he did not direct it. Ultimately a formidable weapon was found for use against him, in the shape of a charge of having accepted bribes in connection with certain Chancery suits.

In an age when every prominent court official was not only open to the offering of "presents," but even regarded them as a regular perquisite, there was nothing remarkable in the Chancellor's being as approachable as the rest, especially as it could not be shown that Bacon had in any case actually perverted justice in return for a bribe. The fact that such an accusation was eagerly welcomed by his enemies shows the bitter animosity his public life had engendered against him; and, naturally, the charge bore an aspect more serious than usual when directed against one who had, at any rate in theory, professed such purity of conduct. The extent to which the offer of "presents" was allowed to sway public conduct in those days is shown by a remark of King James to an ambassador, to the effect that "if he were to begin to punish those who had taken bribes, he would soon not have a single subject left".

Be that as it may, these accusations proved sufficient to ruin Bacon. To meet the evidence which his detractors accumulated against him, he at first endeavoured to justify or at any rate excuse the taking of "presents" in certain circumstances. When he saw that protestations and explanations were of no use, he ruefully admitted that he may have "partaken of the abuse of the times," though he stoutly, and probably truthfully, maintained that he had never deliberately perverted justice for the sake of money. That justice had miscarried through his initiative was unfortunately undeniable; greed of money had not been the motive,

but the corrupt intriguing with which he was inextricably bound up. Eventually, when put upon his trial, he made full and public confession that "in the points charged against him" there was "a great deal of corruption and neglect". "The Lord Chancellor," he wrote to the Chief Justice, "will make no manner of defence to the charge, but meaneth to acknowledge corruption and to make a particular confession to every point." Parliament condemned him to a fine of £40,000, imprisonment in the Tower during the king's pleasure, and ineligibility for ever for any public office. A striking contrast to Bacon's own treatment of his friends is offered by the fact that George Villiers (whom Bacon had so faithfully, if unscrupulously, served) was the only one of his judges who dissented from the motion to inflict this penalty. The imprisonment in the Tower only lasted for two days; but, in spite of Bacon's urgent appeals, the king from the day of his sentence made it evident that the culprit's exclusion from Court was to be permanent.

Bacon's health, already impaired by more than one serious illness, was broken by this disaster, but his mental powers were unimpaired. The remaining five years of his life he himself well described as "a long cleansing week of five years' expiation and more"; for the patience with which he met his adversity shows him in a better light than ever before in his life. Of this the words of his secretary are eloquent: "Though his fortune may have changed, yet I never saw any change in his mien, his words, or his deeds, towards any man . . . but he was always the same both in sorrow and joy, as a philosopher ought to be". He devoted himself entirely to his books, and between

1621 and 1626 wrote the *Sylva Sylvarum*, a *History of Henry VII.*, and a number of minor treatises, besides publishing the completed edition of the *Essays*. He was, no doubt, able to fortify himself against the sneers of the world by the conviction that as a philosopher he was devoted to one great end which lifted him above the necessity of considering the sordid means he had been obliged to use. At the same time, he felt undisguised regret for his mistake in choosing a public life, a choice originally made (as we have seen) in the hope of gaining such independence of circumstances as he considered a necessary preliminary to his philosophic studies. His case seems to be suggested in his essay "On Wisdom for a Man's Self," where he speaks of those who, "whereas they have all their time sacrificed to themselves, become in the end themselves sacrifices to the inconstancy of fortune, whose wings they thought by their self-wisdom to have pinioned".

His fatal illness was brought on by a chill, contracted by his leaving his coach one cold March day, when the snow lay on the ground, to buy a fowl at a cottage and stuff it with snow in order to observe what effect this would have in preserving the flesh from putrefaction. He lingered for a few days at a friend's house on the road, and died on Easter Day, 9th April, 1626. He was buried in St. Michael's Church at St. Albans.

It is curious that the most important, and certainly the most profound, prose writer of his day should have been so little attracted by the growing richness of his own language; but, whether it was that he considered Latin to be the only worthy vehicle for serious thought, or whether he found its preciseness most suited to the directness which is the characteristic of his style, it is certain that Bacon preferred to

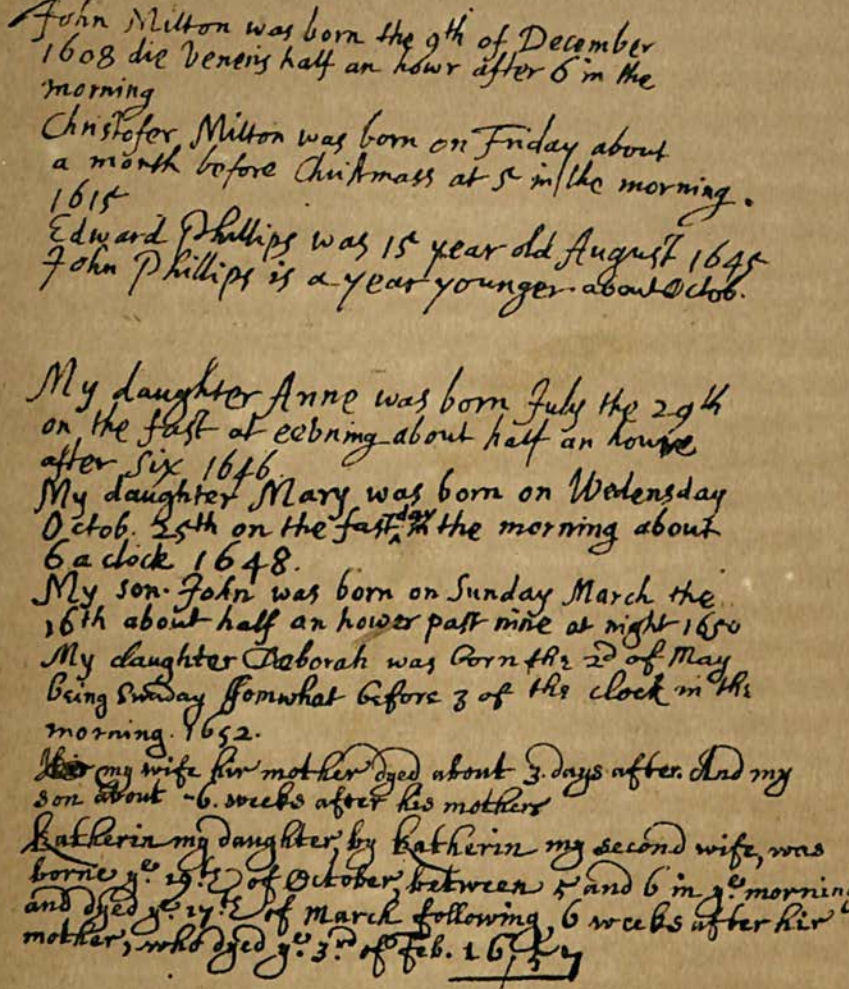
write in Latin. Even some of his English writings (for instance, the *Essays* and the *History of Henry VII.*) were put into Latin by other hands at his own request. The conciseness and condensed thought which marks his written style was characteristic of him also in conversation. "No man," says Ben Jonson, "ever spoke more neatly, more pressly, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness in what he uttered. . . . His hearers could not cough or look aside from him without loss."

It is but fair to Bacon to say that where his treatment of men who stood in his way appears unjust or even vindictive, its motive was either to do a service to his powerful friends or to clear the way for his own advance. He did not condescend to petty spite or the mere desire to revenge himself. "He was no revenger of injuries," his chaplain wrote of him, "which if he had minded, he had both opportunity and place high enough to have done it." Of his disloyalty to his friends, and of the apparent docility with which his sense of honour submitted to the dictates of expediency, there is ample evidence; but it is clear that he fully persuaded himself that, in view of the peculiar conditions upon which he had made up his mind to a public career, he was justified in using such means as he did to attain a position which would enable him (as he believed) to become one of the greatest benefactors to his race. Artificial as it may appear to us, his conception of his mission as a philosopher was perfectly sincere; and his conviction that, in consequence of this, his actions should be judged by a standard different from that applied to those of ordinary men, may explain much that is puzzling or distasteful in his life as a public man.

It is pleasanter to turn to his personal relations with those brought into contact with him, for they seem to have been of the most genial, provided always that the acquaintance proved no bar to his career. His personal charm must have been great, to judge by the enthusiasm with which Dr. Rawley, his chaplain, wrote of him after his death. Rawley's memoir of him is much more than a dependent's obsequious praise of his great patron. It is unmistakeably prompted by real affection as well as admiration. He has much to say of Bacon's mental gifts, but parallels them with his kindly behaviour to his servants and his courteous treatment of his friends. In conversation with the latter Rawley records him to have been "ever a countenancer and fosterer of another man's parts. Neither was he one that would appropriate the speech wholly to himself, or delight to outvie others, but . . . would draw a man on, and allure him to speak upon such a subject as wherein he was particularly skilful and would delight to speak. And for himself, he contemned no man's observations, but would light his torch at every man's candle."

The same authority gives us some intimate glimpses into the details of the great man's life; such as, that "he was no plodder upon books, though he read much, and that with great judgment, and rejection of impertinences incident to many authors; for he would ever interlace a moderate relaxation of his mind with his studies, as walking or taking the air abroad in his coach"; or that he affected "a plentiful and liberal diet, as his stomach would bear it"; or, again, that whereas, apparently, Bacon was credited with being a hypochondriac, "he did indeed live physically, but not miserably".

A quaint touch is added by Rawley's gravely saying that "it may seem the moon had some principal place in the figure of his nativity: for the moon was never in her passion or eclipsed, but he was surprised with a sudden fit of fainting . . . and as soon as the eclipse ceased, he was restored to his former strength again."



John Milton was born the 9th of December 1608 die Veneris half an hour after 6 in the morning

Christofer Milton was born on Friday about a month before Christmass at 5 in the morning. 1615

Edward Phillips was 15 year old August 1645

John Phillips is a year younger about Octob.

My daughter Anne was born July the 29th on the fast at eebning about half an houre after Six 1646

My daughter Mary was born on Wednesday Octob. 25th on the fast day in the morning about 6 a clock 1648.

My son. John was born on Sunday March the 16th about half an hower past nine at night 1650

My daughter Deborah was born the 2d of May being Sunday somwhat before 3 of the clock in the morning. 1652.

~~Her~~ my wife hir mother dyed about 3. days after. And my son about 6. weeks after his mother

~~Katherin~~ Katherin my daughter by Katherin my second wife, was borne 9o. 25. of October, between 5 and 6 in 9o. morning, and dyed 9o. 27. of March following, 6 weeks after hir mother, who dyed 9o. 3d. of Feb. 16[illegible]

JOHN MILTON.

Facsimile (reduced) from fly-leaf of Bible belonging to Milton, containing entries made by him respecting himself and his family. (The last two entries were made by another hand, after his blindness.) (Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 32,310.)

(*Face page* 29.

III.

MILTON.

MILTON'S life falls readily into three divisions—his youth and education, which meant to him a strict and intentional training of his mind to fit it for the task of poetry; his life as a public man, engrossed in the cares of office and the excitement of polemics; and his last years of retirement, a period of darkness illuminated by the creation of his great epics. He may be said, like Bacon, to have given to his country the best years of his life, which should have belonged to literature; but, unlike Bacon, he made the sacrifice, not only deliberately, but from conviction that it was a supreme duty, whose fulfilment (though it might bring him disaster, as indeed it did) was nevertheless inevitable by a man of integrity.

His grandfather was one of a considerable family of Miltons who, in Elizabeth's time, were spread about in Oxfordshire. His father had, as a young man, established himself in London as a "scrivener," an occupation something above that of a law-stationer and something below that of a lawyer, but partaking of both callings. So it was that in the city of London, in a house in Bread Street, John Milton was born on 9th December, 1608.

The elder Milton was a man of considerable culture and an accomplished musician. The comfortable for-

tune he had made for himself enabled him to give his children a more than usually good education; and what was, especially in John Milton's case, even more valuable was that, while the sons were given to understand that they would need to make their own living, there was no straitness of means to necessitate their being forced into occupations uncongenial to them.

The future poet soon gave evidence of the bent his mind was taking; for by the time he was fifteen he had written poetry, some of which he afterwards printed in the volume which presented *Comus* to the world. He had, however, as yet probably no thought of poetry as more than an elegant diversion; for, owing to his scholarly disposition and early industry, the Church appeared to his father as the obvious career to be chosen for him, and to that end, after an excellent grounding at home and at St. Paul's School, he was sent to Cambridge. He must have been an attractive boy, to judge from an early portrait—clear eyes looking frankly out beneath a good forehead, a long straight nose, well-shaped mouth and firm chin. John Aubrey, his contemporary, says that Milton when quite young "studied very hard, and sate up very late, commonly till twelve or one o'clock at night".

Seven years' residence at Cambridge—where his good looks and clean life gained him the nickname of "lady"—expanded his ideas and trained his perceptions, with the effect that he left the university profoundly dissatisfied. He had seen at too close quarters the process of manufacturing Clergy; and, moreover, his rapidly forming convictions as to the true position and duties of a national Church made it impossible for him to take Holy Orders. This fact in itself barred the way to a college fellowship, where

otherwise he might have been well pleased to indulge his inclination for teaching, and to promote his theories of a real education as opposed to the artificial teaching which, he considered, prevailed at Cambridge. "Here among us," he wrote from Cambridge to a former schoolfellow, "are barely one or two who do not flutter off, all unfledged, into theology. . . . And for theology they are content with just what is enough to enable them to patch up a paltry sermon."

Thus the idea of the Church was given up; and Milton's father, who seems to have ever had a wise confidence in his son's discretion, acquiesced in his returning to live at home with as yet no choice made of a profession. But Milton, who was now nearly four-and-twenty, had already satisfied himself as to his vocation, though he kept his own counsel in the matter. His mind, as he afterwards wrote, was "made and set wholly on the accomplishment of greatest things," and this accomplishment was to be in Poetry. When he was little more than thirty, he says, he had "an inward prompting that by labour and intent study he might perhaps leave something so written to after times as they should not willingly let it die". That "labour and intent study" were necessary he was convinced by his early attempt, in a poem on "The Passion of Christ," to write on a heroic scale. Only eight stanzas of this were written, and the poem ends abruptly with a note to the effect that "this subject the author finding to be above the years he had when he wrote it, and nothing satisfied with what was begun, left it unfinished". As if, however, to belie the theory that poetic inspiration could achieve no greater end without "intent study," he had, while still at Cambridge, composed the noble *Hymn on the*

Nativity, and, about the year 1633, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* were written.

By the time Milton left Cambridge his father had retired from business, and gone to live at Horton, in Buckinghamshire. Here Milton spent the next five years, industriously acquiring knowledge, with one aim always before him and his creative inclinations kept sternly in check. A man, he held, must acquire all knowledge before daring to be a poet, "not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men or famous cities unless he have in himself the experience and practice of all that is praiseworthy". Moral development and a deep sense of religion he held to be as indispensable as knowledge. "Devout prayer, select reading, steady observation and insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs"—this was necessary for a poet's equipment. Throughout, the epic is his ideal of poetry. The classic poets, especially Homer and Virgil, were his models; and his deliberate study of books, rather than of men and nature, removed him farther and farther from purely emotional or descriptive writing.

When he had been five years at Horton he seems to have felt as if at last his feet stood upon some firm basis, and he were justified in giving rein to his fancy. A letter he wrote from Horton to his old schoolfellow Diodati vouches for his industry. Speaking of his studies, he says: "No delay, no rest, no care or thought almost of anything holds me aside until I reach the end I am making for, and round off, as it were, some great period of my studies". But by the end of 1637 he could write to the same friend: "You make many inquiries as to what I am about. What am I thinking of? Why, with God's help, of immor-

tality! Forgive the word, I only whisper it in your ear! Yes, I am pluming my wings for a flight."

Just then occasion offered Milton opportunity for a "flight" of remarkable strength and beauty. He was invited to contribute to a volume of Cambridge Elegies upon the untoward death of Edward King, a fellow of Milton's college, who had been drowned at sea; and Milton, with his *Lycidas*, gave the dead man immortality in an elegy which must always rank as one of the most beautiful examples of this somewhat artificial form of lament. A year or two previously he had written the masque of *Comus*, which he published in 1637. Thanks, no doubt, to his father's musical tastes, Milton had made friends with Henry Lawes, the most prominent English composer of the day. Lawes had been asked to furnish a masque for an entertainment to be given at Ludlow Castle in 1634, and applied to Milton to write the words of it for him. The answer to the request was *Comus*, which, in spite of its occasional pedantry, is a rich storehouse of beautiful thoughts, expressed as only a poet of fine nature could express them. That the young poet's work was by this time attracting some attention is shown by the inclusion of his lines to Shakespeare's memory (beginning: "What needs my Shakespeare for his honour'd bones") in the second edition of Shakespeare's collected plays, published in 1632.

In the autumn of 1637 we find Milton writing to Diodati that he is beginning to feel the limitations of Horton irksome, and thinks of settling in London. Thanks, perhaps, to a suggestion of Diodati's, he determined first to travel abroad. His father, believing in him, and ready as ever to help him in his prepara-

tion for his unnamed life's work, cheerfully provided him with the sum of money necessary for a long tour; and in the following spring Milton started for the South. His return, after a happy year spent in Italy, was saddened by the news of the death of Diodati, to whose memory he wrote the Latin *Epitaphium Damonis*, an elegy so full of genuine tenderness and sorrow that it surpasses even *Lycidas* in beauty, as it does in sincerity.

The reason of his return was the news of the outbreak of the Revolution. "The sad news of civil war in England," he says, "called me back; for I considered it base that, while my fellow-countrymen were fighting at home for liberty, I should be travelling abroad for intellectual culture." His deep-rooted sense of duty made him unhesitatingly abandon his own inclinations in favour of what seemed to him to be demanded of a patriot. The best twenty years of his life were cheerfully given up to political strife, for the reason that his convictions would not allow of his remaining inactive as long as he was able to strike a blow for what he held to be the right. All thoughts of the poetical task to which his whole life hitherto had been but the preparation were put into the background, and his undivided mind given to the affairs of his distracted country.

Settled in a "pretty garden-house" in Aldersgate, close to the open country of Islington, he at first had no idea of an active political life. "I looked about," he tells us, "to see if I could get any place that would hold myself and my books . . . cheerfully leaving the event of public affairs, first to God, and then to those to whom the people had committed that task." He occupied himself with the education of two young

nephews, and by degrees gathered other pupils. He apparently had a genuine love of teaching, and could not but have been glad of this congenial manner of adding to his somewhat slender means. A year or two after this he published a small treatise upon Education.

It was not until after the meeting of the Long Parliament in 1640 that Milton, however unwillingly, definitely entered the political arena. His own words best show the earnestness of his attitude: "Perceiving that the true way to liberty followed on from these beginnings, inasmuch also as I had so prepared myself from my youth that, above all things, I could not be ignorant what is of Divine and what of human right, I resolved, though I was then meditating other matters, to transfer into this struggle all my genius and all the strength of my industry". It was when, from amongst the various points in dispute, the Church question rose paramount that Milton made this resolution; and so it came about that his mind, which held such works as *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* in embryo, was given over for nearly twenty years to political pamphleteering. Regrettable as it may appear to us in the light of its result, such devotion to a sense of duty is none the less the most honourable monument to the nobility of Milton's character; the more so when we realise that it was eventually to mean to him loss of sight and health, and almost ruin as far as his personal affairs were concerned.

Of the mass of pamphlets he wrote at this time probably the only one whose fame has survived its occasion is *Areopagitica* (published in 1644), an eloquent remonstrance against a recent edict of Parliament

appointing a licenser and censor of printing. This Milton considered to be a direct attack upon the liberties of the people, and his own *Areopagitica* was, in defiance of the new edict, ostentatiously published without license.

Meanwhile, in 1643, he had made a marriage which turned out disastrously. His wife, Mary Powell, was an unintelligent country girl, one of a large family of Cavalier propensities, brought up in a house frequented by Royalist roysterers, and probably entirely out of sympathy with the earnest student whose life she agreed to share. How she came to make the bargain we cannot tell; probably Milton's good looks had most to do with it; but the fact remains that after a month of married life she returned, despite her husband's remonstrances, to her parents, ostensibly for a short visit. All Milton's efforts failed in inducing her to return to him until, late in 1645, she unexpectedly made up her mind to ask his pardon and beg him to take her back. She was probably spurred on to this by the fact that her husband (who had meantime raised a storm of controversy by publishing a pamphlet on the subject of Marriage and Divorce) had been unmistakeably laying siege to the heart of a certain "very handsome and witty gentlewoman". Moreover, her father's fortunes had been influenced by those of the war, and he had been turned out of his house; so, probably, even the shelter of Milton's roof was welcome.

She was forgiven and taken back, and this ill-assorted pair managed to endure one another till she died in 1652, having borne him four children. Milton, at the time of their reconciliation, had moved into a larger house, where he could accommodate more

pupils; but his father's death in 1646 made his circumstances easier, and the teaching was given up. The little leisure left him by his other duties had been employed in characteristic fashion. No poetry had been written, but he had planned a History of England, a System of Theology, and a Latin Dictionary. Perhaps anxious, however, to keep alive his name as a poet until happier times should allow him to turn again to his Muse, he agreed to the proposal of an enterprising printer to publish, in 1645, a collection of some of his early poems.

After the execution of Charles I. Milton openly espoused the cause of the new Republic, by affirming the justice of the people's action in a pamphlet on *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, proving that it is lawful . . . to call to account a Tyrant or wicked King.* So influential an ally was obviously marked out for distinction at the hands of the Commonwealth; and, in March 1649, Milton was offered, and accepted, the office of Secretary for Foreign Tongues. This he held, at any rate nominally, until the Restoration. His chief duty was the drafting of letters sent to foreign states, but soon he came to be looked upon as the authorised mouthpiece of the Commonwealth in the political controversy. With *Eikonoklastes* he sought in 1649 to demolish the *Eikon Basilike* which fervent Royalists believed to have been written by the dead King; and in the following year he was called to another war of words, one, this time, from which he was to issue grievously though honourably wounded. A French scholar of the name of Salmasius—a man of great distinction at the time—had been employed by the Royalists to write a defence of the "Royal Martyr"; and early in 1650 the Council of State

decided to recommend "that Mr. Milton do prepare something in answer to the book of Salmasius".

For some time Milton's eyesight had been affected; indeed, he now only had the perfect use of one eye, and was warned that if he strained the sight of this, total blindness would result. He, however, faced the inevitable sacrifice with a splendid courage. "The choice lay before me," he afterwards wrote, "between dereliction of a supreme duty and loss of eyesight; in such a case I could not listen to the physician, not if Æsculapius himself had spoken from his sanctuary." The book, *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*, was published in the spring of 1651, and proved an immediate victory over Salmasius; but before a year had passed the conqueror was blind.

Milton was blind, and his life's work in poetry was not begun. This was a combination of misfortunes that might well have soured or dismayed even such a nature as his; but he rose grandly above all his ills, "resting in the belief that eyesight lies not in eyes alone, but enough for all purposes in God's leading and providence". His office was continued till the Restoration, though the more active part of his duties was entrusted to a deputy. His friend, the young poet Andrew Marvell, was for some time his assistant. In November 1656 he had married again. For a little more than a year he was very happy in this new union, until both wife and infant daughter died early in 1658.

It is astonishing, considering the bitterness his attitude had aroused among the Royalists, that Milton was allowed to escape the hangman at the Restoration. He was, indeed, arrested and imprisoned for a short time, and his books were publicly burnt; but his life was not aimed at. Still, one disaster after another came

upon him. Obviously he could hope for no public office, nor would he have accepted such under the restored monarchy. While his means were thus greatly reduced, he lost a large sum which he had invested in Government securities under the Protectorate, as well as other moneys lost either by rash speculation or a lawyer's dishonesty. His three daughters were growing up; and from them, instead of a loving care which would have lightened his distress, he received nothing but neglect, or even worse. His friends were few, though in the attachment of one or two young men—notably Andrew Marvell and a young Quaker, Thomas Ellwood—Milton found some comfort. To ease this solitude he consented to the advice of his friends that he should once more marry; and in February 1663 he took to wife Elizabeth Minshull, who, though thirty years his junior, proved an excellent wife and manager of his household. From the day of her coming into his house his life became brighter; his daughters' persecution of him was stopped, and he was free to indulge the resources of his mind, upon which he had been thrown by the shattering of his public ideals at the Puritan overthrow.

At the age of fifty-two—blind, poor, dependent upon others even for the writing down of his thoughts—he was at last to begin the work for which his life had been one long, oft-interrupted preparation. *Paradise Lost* had been begun a year or two before the Restoration; but it was not until 1665 that he gave the completed MS. of the poem to his friend and amanuensis, Thomas Ellwood, to read. At that time Milton was living at Chalfont St. Giles, in a cottage Ellwood had found for him as a refuge from the plague which was devastating London. After reading the stupend-

ous epic, Ellwood made the famous remark, "Thou hast said much here of Paradise Lost, but what hast thou to say of Paradise Regained?" to which, as Milton afterwards told him, was due the birth of the second epic. *Paradise Lost* was published in 1667, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* together in 1671.

To appreciate the amazed admiration with which these works were greeted it is necessary to realise that, except in the drama, blank verse was in Milton's day scarcely recognised as poetry, of which rhyme was considered an indispensable adjunct. *Paradise Lost* was (as an "argument" prefixed to its second impression claimed) "an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of riming". The facility with which Milton handled this new form of verse, its nobility of subject, its scholarly character, reflecting as it did the best elements of the Homeric and Virgilian epics, all combined to produce an effect which wrung from Dryden, himself the champion of rhyme, the remark (which is at any rate attributed to him) "this man cuts us all out, and the ancients too".

For *Paradise Lost* Milton received £10, a sum equal in purchasing power to about £40 now. The original agreement between him and the printer, Samuel Symons, has been preserved. Its provisions are that Milton was to receive £5 down, and a further £5 for each of the first three subsequent editions. Milton only lived to see the second edition; and, six years after his death, his widow disposed of all her interest in the copyright for £8.

The success of *Paradise Lost* must have been very dear to Milton's heart, while the attention it attracted to the blind poet was a welcome means of increasing

his circle of friends, which had sadly shrunk under the opprobrium of which he was the mark at the Restoration. He had returned to London to hear of further loss, for in the great fire of 1666 his house in Bread Street had been burnt down. He met disaster with the same gentle courage as ever ; no doubt the more able to do so, now that he had secured for himself the position that had been his aim all his life through. Acknowledged the greatest poet of his day, his society courted by visitors of all ranks, and lovingly tended by his wife, he could not be unhappy despite his perpetual darkness.

A visitor to Milton at this time describes him as "sitting, in a grey coarse cloth coat, at the door of his house near Bunhill Fields, in warm sunny weather, to enjoy that fresh air and receive visits". Another relates that in an upstairs room "hung with rusty green, was Milton, sitting in an elbow chair ; black clothes and neat enough, pale but not cadaverous, his hands and fingers gouty and with chalkstones". To this visitor Milton said that, were he free from the pain the gout gave him, his blindness would be tolerable. His daughters had been sent out to earn themselves a living by embroidery work, and there is little doubt that the peace of the household gained by this step. His wife, as he told his brother shortly before his death, "had been very kind and careful of him," though his daughters had been "unkind". His practical piety and deep religious sense were unquestioned ; though he declined to label himself as an adherent of any sect, he was an uncomprising opponent of Church establishment, and for a great part of his life attended no public place of worship.

His somewhat austere demeanour cloaked a very

gentle heart; "manly and resolute, but with a gentlemanly affability," as one of his friends characterises him. In manhood he grew to rather below the middle height; was of a well-knit figure; and, in his best years, had a delicate complexion and a quantity of light brown hair. His love for music helped to solace his blindness; this and the conversation of his friends were his chief means of recreation.

Having produced his three great poems, he wrote no more poetry during the four last years of his life. Possibly in the hope of enlarging his means, he took up some of his early literary schemes and applied himself to them with an industry that seemed in no way impaired by his age or his helplessness. Before *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* appeared, he had published a Latin Grammar and a *History of Britain*. In 1672 he published a *Logic*, in 1673 a new edition of his poems, and till a few days before his death was engaged in preparing for the press a Compendium of Theology. He had also begun to compile a Geography on a new system, and a Latin Lexicon.

In the autumn of 1674 the gout attacked him internally, and on Sunday, 8th November, he died, peacefully and apparently painlessly. Four days later he was buried in St. Giles' Church, Cripplegate, amid an assembly of "all his learned and great friends in London, not without a concourse of the vulgar".

I Frankly Acknowlege to yo Lordſip, and to ỹ Unknown Rewarders of my Mean Performances, That I do not See ỹ Merit They are Thus Pleas'd to Vallue, the moſt I wiſh and wᶜʰ I Hope I Can Answer for is, That I Shall Allwayes Preſerve the Homely Despicable Title of an Honeſt Man If This will Recomend me yo Lordſip Shall Never be Asham'd of giveing me that Title. Nor my Enemys be able by Fear Or Reward to Make me other wiſe

In all other things I juſtly Apprehend yo Lordſips Diſappointment and That yo Lᵈſhip will find little Elſe in Me Worth yᵒʳ Notice

I am

May it Pleaſe yo Lordſip.

yo Lᵈſhips Highly Obligᵈ

Moſt Humble and Moſt Obedᵗ Servᵗ

Daniel De Foe

DANIEL DEFOE.

Facsimile of part of a page of a Letter to Lord Halifax. (Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 7,121, f. 28.)

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IV

DEFOE.

DEFOE'S reputation is one of the strangest instances of the capriciousness of fame. A man whose whole life centred in his political activity, for whose assistance as a political pamphleteer Government after Government eagerly paid; a writer who was essentially what we should nowadays call a "journalist," who wrote indefatigably upon any subject that came to hand or seemed likely to interest his readers; an author whose fiction was merely an incident in his literary career, and that career not as important in his own eyes as his political services,—it is this man's fate to be remembered by posterity only as the author of a tale of adventure written when he was nearly fifty. But by that time he was so deeply versed in life, and had become so consummate a master of his language, that his authorship of *Robinson Crusoe* has gained for him at the hands of the greatest critics the title of the father of English fiction.

Daniel Defoe was born, probably in 1660 or late in 1659, in London. His father, whose name was James Foe, carried on a butcher's business in Cripplegate. It has been conjectured with some probability that the reason of the altered surname by which Daniel Defoe is known to us originated in his being known as "Mr. D. Foe" to distinguish him from his father, who

lived till his son was forty-five and had become famous. However that may be, the future author of *Robinson Crusoe* used either form of the name till late in his life, and ultimately adopted Defoe as his signature. He was a man of considerable vanity, and it may quite well be that he was not above the affectation of appearing to connect his origin with a Norman-French ancestry. His personal character, as shown by his life, has been represented by his various biographers in widely differing lights. Mr. Lee's admiration for him leads him to represent him as something of a paragon of rectitude; Professor Minto calls him "a great, a truly great liar, perhaps the greatest liar that ever lived," a man "whose dishonesty went too deep to be called superficial," yet with "stubborn foundations of conscience". Probably Mr. Saintsbury's estimate of him as a man who, according to his lights, was strictly honest, but with a rather blunt moral perception, is nearest to the mark.

His father, who was a Nonconformist, destined him for the Dissenting ministry, and to that end, as he tells us, spared nothing in his son's education. Samuel Wesley was one of Daniel Defoe's fellow-students at a good school in Stoke Newington, where the rather unusual surname of one of his schoolfellows supplied him with that of the hero of his famous romance. Much as Milton had been at Cambridge disgusted with the training of aspirants to Orders in the Established Church and with the light manner in which the sacred vows were undertaken, so Defoe, when he saw something of the manufacture of the Dissenting minister, became regretfully convinced that a man who thought at all seriously of religion could not accept such a position with either honour or profit. "It was my disaster,"

he afterwards wrote, "first to be set apart for, and then to be set apart from the honour of that sacred employ." At the Stoke Newington school he was well grounded in the classics and modern languages, and acquired a good deal of miscellaneous information to which he added in after life with rapacious avidity. We have very little knowledge of the details of his early manhood; but it is more than likely that his active mind soon found a vent in the direction where he was afterwards to play so prominent a part; that is to say, in the writing of pamphlets upon burning questions of the day. This could not but be attractive to an ardent young Dissenter at a time when the struggle between the Crown and the defendants of Protestantism was still keen. Moreover, in his later years he boasted of having taken part in the Duke of Monmouth's Rebellion; and this, of course, on the Duke's side.

In 1685, after Monmouth's execution, Defoe set up as a hosier in Cornhill, having married in the previous year. His wife was a certain Mary Tuffley; but of her, or of their married life, we know practically nothing. The allurements of politics soon proved stronger than those of business, which we may well believe to have suffered in consequence, though subsequent events show that the trade connection he established was considerable. As the literary instinct began to stir within him, his energetic political sympathies found a vent in the writing of pamphlets. These ephemeral publications filled the part played in our own day by articles in reviews or magazines. The newspapers of Defoe's day were true to their name; and critical articles, satires and the like appeared for the most part in the form of pamphlets which were hawked in the streets. This explains the

portentous number of separate publications that could be laid to the account of any polemical writer. Upwards of 250 have been traced as the result of Defoe's pen, in addition to his professedly journalistic labours in such periodicals as *The Review*, *Mercurius Politicus*, and others.

He entered heart and soul into the ferment of the Revolution of 1688, and is reported to have been one of the most eager, "gallantly mounted and richly accoutred," to welcome the entry of William and Mary into London. His hosiery business, perhaps as the result of his absorption in more exciting matters, came to an abrupt collapse three or four years later, and he effected a prudent retirement to Bristol. From that safe distance he negotiated with his London creditors; indeed, tradition has it that he was known there as the "Sunday gentleman," from the fact that it was only upon that day that he could venture out of his house for fear of arrest at the bailiffs' hands. He seems to have made a reasonable composition with his creditors, and to have adhered honourably to it; and it is greatly to his credit that in the course of time he voluntarily paid in full his liabilities to most of them. He, at the same time, relieved his feelings by a series of pamphlets upon the condition of the law of debtors and bankruptcy.

His position, in spite of his commercial mishap, must have been considerable, for he soon appears to have gained Court favour. He tells us that he refused a post as agent in his own line of business at Cadiz, for the reason that he had the opportunity at home of being "concerned with some eminent persons" in national financial operations. He mentions, too, his having attended Queen Mary when she made her

inspection of the newly designed Kensington Gardens. His conspicuous support of the king with his pen bore good fruit in his appointment to the secretaryship to the Commissioners on the Glass Duty, a post he held for four years, till the duty was removed.

He had also at this time started upon a new commercial enterprise, a pantile manufactory at Tilbury. In this case again his public activity brought ruin to his private undertakings. Not only did William III.'s death deprive Defoe of Court support, it also marks his entrance into the arena of Church controversy, with disastrous results to himself. As a protest against the persecution of the Dissenters by the powerful High Church party, he published (in 1702) the famous pamphlet, *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. This was a piece of savage irony directed against the High Churchmen, who were powerful enough to get an order issued for Defoe's arrest. He went into hiding for a while; and it is to the proclamation that was posted, offering a reward for his discovery, that we owe the only contemporary account we have of his personal appearance. It describes him as "a middle-aged, spare man . . . of a brown complexion, and dark-brown coloured hair, but wears a wig; a hooked nose, a sharp chin, grey eyes, and a large mole near his mouth".

He surrendered to his trial, and was found guilty of seditious libel. He was condemned to stand thrice in the pillory, to be fined 200 marks, to be imprisoned during the queen's pleasure, and to find sureties for good behaviour for seven years. The pamphlet was publicly burnt by the hangman; but Defoe's appearance in the pillory was made the occasion of a triumphal reception at the hands of the mob, who seemed to regard him as a champion of public liberties.

His imprisonment in Newgate lasted from July 1703 to August 1704. While awaiting his trial he had prepared a collection of his earlier pamphlets for publication, and, after his sentence, composed a satirical *Hymn to the Pillory* which was immensely popular in the streets.

While he was in prison this indefatigable man planned and carried out what was in many ways the most remarkable of his literary schemes. It was nothing less than a newspaper (which for the greater part of its existence of nine years appeared three times a week) entirely written by himself. *The Review*, as it was called, was deliberately aimed at the mass of the people, and its contents suited to all classes. It combined news with criticism of the kind found in the leading articles of our present-day newspapers ; it also included miscellaneous articles that were clearly the progenitors of the class of essays that rendered Steele's "Tatler" and Addison's "Spectator" popular. *The Review*, however, undertook a great deal more than these journals ever professed. It practically meant, as he himself said, his writing a contemporary history in instalments which were published as soon as they were finished.

When he was released from prison he began energetically to concern himself with the project of the Union between England and Scotland. As the secret agent of the Government, and under the protection of his patron Harley (who had been the means of his release from imprisonment), he was in Scotland at various times between 1706 and 1712, collecting information and reporting upon the political tendencies of influential personages there. Besides this, his brilliant pen, in *The Review* and elsewhere, was of obvious

service to the ministry. It must be admitted that the subsequent fluctuations of the respective fortunes of the Whig and Tory parties were reflected by the fluctuations in the character of Defoe's political utterances. He was a turncoat, but one of unblushing frankness; ever on the watch to justify his conduct, and generally competent to do so in a plausible manner. To do him justice, it seems not unlikely that there was a solid foundation of patriotism beneath his attitude. The Whig policy at home, and the Tory policy in foreign affairs, appealed to him. In consequence he was accused of wishing to "run with the hare and hunt with the hounds," and both parties eventually came to distrust him. One result of this was that in 1715 he published *An Appeal to Honour and Justice*, which was an apology for and justification of his attitude. It apparently in some degree succeeded in its object, for he was, for a year or two after this, still concerned with politics. Eventually, however, politics claimed him less and less, and literature gained what "occasional journalism" and pamphleteering lost.

In April 1719 the first volume of *Robinson Crusoe* appeared. The experiences of Alexander Selkirk, who had been for four years a lonely castaway on the island of Juan Fernandez, furnished Defoe with the idea for his romance; and in this, as in most of his fiction, he managed, with all the astuteness of the shrewd journalist, to seize upon a topic that had recently engrossed public attention. Journalist, however, and opportunist as he was by instinct, he was far more than the journalist when it came to creative work. *Robinson Crusoe* no doubt owed much of its immediate popularity to its being written "apt to the

time" ; but it is such a superlative example of straightforward fiction that it has lived ever since, to be classed with the few masterpieces of pure story-telling. It has been well said that it is Defoe's power of inventing plausible incidents that distinguishes *Robinson Crusoe* from the fiction of its day ; it was, in fact, the forerunner of all realistic novels of adventure. Four months after its appearance (when it had gone through four editions) *Crusoe's Further Adventures* appeared ; and a year later Defoe, determined to work his success to its utmost limit, issued a volume of *Crusoe's Serious Reflections.* These are exceedingly tedious, and have deservedly dropped into oblivion. Whether *Robinson Crusoe* was in any sense an allegory of Defoe's own life, as he has been thought to aver in a passage in the *Serious Reflections*, is not certain. The point is not essential. Defoe's name is imperishably bound up with *Crusoe* as the author of one of the best tales ever told ; and though it may not be the reputation he would have chosen for himself, it is one open to no detraction. Of his honesty as a political controversialist there may be room for question ; of his right to the admiration of every generation as a writer of romance there is none.

In the remaining ten years of his life, though he still contributed to certain newspapers and journals, he was mainly occupied with fiction. *Captain Singleton, Moll Flanders, The History of Colonel Jack* and *Roxana* followed close upon the heels of *Crusoe.* As in its case, so in many of these less famous novels of his, the central idea was suggested by some incident that had arrested public attention. His power of realistic invention invested imaginary biographies with an extraordinary verisimilitude ; and, perhaps even more than

in his novels, this quality is evident in his *Journal of the Plague Year*, which was published in 1722. In the previous year France had been the scene of a disastrous epidemic which had turned the public mind to the great plague of 1665. Defoe's account of the earlier plague is so vivid, and his description of what must have been its attendant horrors so circumstantial, that many maintained that it must have been founded upon some detailed record of the time. It does not appear likely that this was so; but that Defoe's gift of realising probable conditions, and his faculty for assimilating information and selecting evidence were so unerring, that his picture of that terrible time reads as though it were written by one who had himself lived through it.

Little record has come down to us of Defoe's private life at this (or indeed any) period of his career; but, as we learn from the diary of Henry Baker, a son-in-law of his, he must have enjoyed a comfortable income in his later years. Baker relates the beginning of his acquaintance with "Mr. Defoe, a gentleman well known by his writings," who had lately built at Stoke Newington "a very handsome house, as a retirement from London, and amused his time either in the cultivation of a large and pleasant garden, or in the pursuit of his studies, which he found means of making very profitable". At this time Defoe was over sixty, and "afflicted with gout and stone".

The closing years of Defoe's life are wrapt in a certain amount of obscurity. For some reason he had left his home about a year before his death, and seems practically to have been in hiding. The cause for this is most probably to be found in serious embarrassment with his creditors, as the result of the dis-

honesty of his son, of whom Defoe at this time wrote to Baker that he had both ruined his family and broken his father's heart. Defoe's financial position may also have been affected by the fact that his journalistic connections were suddenly ruptured a year or two before, probably owing to the distrust with which both political parties had come to look upon him in consequence of the "trimming" of opinions in which he had indulged. It may be, too, that the brilliant brain, which he had worked so unsparingly, was weakened by the inroads of ill-health, and that Defoe morbidly exaggerated the dangers to which he was exposed. Whatever the reason, we know that his last days were spent apart from his family, who for some time do not seem even to have known where he was.

Fortunately while his prosperity lasted he had been zealous in providing for his children by making over property to them. His solicitude in this respect affords us one of the few glimpses that we can catch of his family life, and shows him in an honourable light as an affectionate father, pathetically anxious that his own ill-fortune shall not affect his children. Whatever may be our opinion of his political rectitude, the little we know of his private character is to his credit. There is no doubt that he was personally charitable, and of a kindly, though occasionally intolerant, disposition. He was a fine swordsman, and admired all manly and athletic sports. At the same time he had the true Puritan's dislike of frivolity, and was an inveterate enemy of intemperance. As tending to lead to the latter vice, he strongly condemned the use of tobacco. Baker tells us that his three daughters were "admired for their beauty, their education, and their prudent

conduct," so it is clear that his duties as a father had not been neglected. And of his political life it is perhaps not too much to say that, however difficult of honourable explanation some of his sudden changes of attitude may be, there was a strain of very sound patriotism underlying most of what he wrote.

He died "of a lethargy" at a house in Moorfields on 6th April, 1731. The political position for which he had fought so bitterly, and for a time so keenly enjoyed, was lost and forgotten; but he had built himself a far more lasting memorial in the great romance by which his name will always be remembered. How indissolubly his name was already bound up with it when he died is shown by the inscription which was cut upon his tombstone. There he was recorded as :—

DANIEL DEFOE,
AUTHOR OF
ROBINSON CRUSOE.

V.

SWIFT.

JONATHAN SWIFT was born in Dublin on 30th November, 1667. In later years he professed to resent this accident of birth which, coupled with the fact that several of the Swift family had previously settled in Ireland, caused him to be regarded more as Irish than English. His father, who died before his son was born, had left but small means behind him; and Swift's tender years owed much to the attachment of a nurse, in whose hands his mother seems to have been well content to leave him. He was apparently a delicate and precocious child, and his natural sensitiveness was increased by the knowledge that he was dependent on the charity of his relations, who were none too considerate of his feelings.

After a short preliminary schooling he was entered at Trinity College, Dublin; but his college career was not such as he could afterwards look back upon with satisfaction. He afterwards wrote that he had "too much neglected his academic studies, for some parts of which he had no great relish by nature," and that the reason of this was the depression and discouragement caused by the treatment he suffered at the hands of his nearest relations. He considered his position to be humiliating, and appears to have sought relief for his feelings—as many do who are obliged to accept

Madam.

I do not now pity the leisure you have to read a letter from me, and this letter shall be a history. First therefore I call you to witness that I did not attend on the Queen till I had received her own repeated messages, which of course occasioned my being introduced to you. I never asked any thing, till upon leaving England the first time. I desired from you a present worth a Guinea, and from Her Majesty, one worth ten pounds, by way of a memorial. Yours I received.; and the Queen upon taking my leave of her, made an excuse, that She had intended a medal for me, which not being ready, She would send it me the Christmas following. Yet this was never done, nor at all remembred when I went back to England the next year, and by her commands attended her as I had done before. I must now tell you Madam, that I will receive no medal from Her Majesty, nor any thing else than her picture at half length drawn by Jervas, and if he takes it from another original, the Queen shall sit at least twice, for him to touch it up. I desire you will let Her Majesty know this in plain words, although I have heard that I am under her displeasure. But this is a usual thing with Princes as well as Ministers upon every false representation and to I took occasion to tell the Queen upon the quarrel we walked had with our friend Gay, the first time I ever had the honor to attend her.

Against you, I have but one reproach, that when I went last in England, and just after the present Kings accession, I resolved to get that Summer in France for which I had then a most lucky opportunity from which those who seemed to love me will dissuaded me by your advice and when I sent you a note conjuring you to lay aside the character of a Courtier and a favorite upon that occasion, your answer positively dissuaded me not to go in that juncture, and you said the same thing to my friends

Madam

Your Ladyships

most obedient, and

most humble Servant

Jonath. Swift.

Dublin July. 27th
1731.

Dr. JONATHAN SWIFT.

Facsimile (reduced) of a Letter to Mrs. Howard. (Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 22,625, f. 20.) (Face page 54.

favours at the hands of others—by defiantly belittling his opportunities. His perceptions were unusually acute for his age, and his quick mind fretted at the formal restrictions of the ordinary methods of learning. All through his life his abnormally keen insight was a possession that brought him misery. In later years it led to the torturing self-analysis of which this youthful sullenness was a symptom. He owed to it the faculty that made him the greatest satirist of his day; but he also owed to it his despairing rejection of some of the best of life's joys. It bred a cynicism which hid from all the world, save one or two of his friends, the tenderness of heart that could win the ungrudging love of two women and the gratitude of the poor. That the cause was in some degree physical is almost certain. There is good reason to believe that quite early in his life he had warning of the mental decay that, sooner or later, inevitably lay in store for him; and it is not difficult to understand the effect that such an ever-present dread must have upon a constitution naturally sensitive and over-prone to introspection.

When the Revolution of 1688 broke out, most of the English in Ireland left the country to avoid outrage at the hands of the insurgent peasantry. Swift and his mother found a retreat at Leicester, and lived there for a short time, until Sir William Temple offered Swift a post in his household as amanuensis. The irksomeness of this new position of dependence seems at first to have been almost intolerable to Swift. He tried to reconcile himself to it by the fiction that his chief reason for becoming one of Temple's household was the desire of enjoying the society and conversation of so cultured a man. After less than a year of it, however, he went back to Dublin and finished his

college career. At the end of that he was invited to resume his place in the household at Moor Park, Temple's seat near Farnham. Temple had probably been impressed by what little he had seen of the abilities of his amanuensis, and a soberer view on Swift's part of the possibilities of such a connection induced him to return.

The years he spent at Moor Park were momentous to Swift, as including the beginning of his intimacy with Esther Johnson, better known to history as his "Stella". She was the daughter of the widow of one of Temple's confidential servants, to whom the use of a cottage on the Moor Park estate had been granted, and was eight years old when Swift went first to Moor Park in 1689. For some reason he took an eager interest in the child; possibly her position, as dependent as his own, appealed to him; and probably the opportunity of finding some one whom he could advise and guide was a welcome relief to his humiliating sense (which he no doubt exaggerated) of not being at first much more than a superior lackey in the eyes of his great patron. To this child his heart opened as it did to no one else, and these years at Moor Park laid the foundation of a lifelong attachment, which touched Swift's heart more deeply than he cared to acknowledge to himself.

As his opinions began to mature, Swift found himself constantly at variance with Temple, and less and less able to stifle his own convictions under the submission he owed to his patron. He had for some time turned his thoughts to the Church as a career, and now finally decided for it. In May 1694 he left Moor Park, and was ordained at the end of the year.

Very soon afterwards, thanks to the exertions of his

relations, he was appointed to a small living at Kilroot, on the shores of Belfast Lough. This, while it meant independence, also meant (as Swift soon discovered) practical exile from all that was mentally stimulating. When he had endured it for two years he willingly listened to Temple's invitation to return to Moor Park, this time in no doubtful position, but as an honoured secretary. In spite of the fact that they had last parted in anger, there was a strong mutual respect between these two dissimilar men ; and now, while on the one hand Temple realised that Swift's services would be worth an effort to regain, Swift himself had gained the stability of character that a sense of responsibility brings with it. Moreover, the routine work of a tiny parish was mere drudgery to a man of active mind ; and it was with no small sense of relief that he found himself again among the interests of the world of politics and letters.

While at Kilroot he had stumbled into a love-affair with a Miss Waring, and no doubt imagined his feelings to be sincere ; but there is equally no doubt that it was just such an instance of "calf-love" as might be expected from an ardent and impressionable young man. There is something amusing in the imperiousness with which, in a letter that has come down to us, he offers his heart to Miss Waring ; a gift which, fortunately for him, she did not consider worth her acceptance unless accompanied by a greater share of worldly goods than he had at his disposal. She seems, however, to have temporised ; for, a year or two later, when Swift was again in Ireland, this time in better circumstances, she renewed her interest in him, and appears to have given him some little difficulty in making her realise that her original refusal of his

offer had disposed of his imagined tenderness for her.

A more important result of his solitude at Kilroot was that it had enabled him to find his powers in the direction of satire ; and one important outcome of these two years was the planning and partial writing of the *Tale of a Tub.* The vague revolt of feeling that in his early years made him impatient of even legitimate authority had crystallised into a definite hatred of pedantry or unreality of every kind. His experience of clerical life, brief as it was, had intensified these feelings by giving him glimpses of the sham religious fervour and mock humility too often displayed by both priests and laity. "I wish you a merry Lent," he wrote to a friend some years later, when he was Dean of St. Patrick's, "I wish you a merry Lent. I hate Lent ; I hate different diets, and furmity and butter, and herb porridge ; and sour, devout faces of people who only put on religion for seven weeks."

For three years Swift lived, apparently contentedly, at Moor Park. In the household he was now treated with every consideration ; he was allowed to dabble in political controversy, and, to much greater effect, in literary polemics ; and, as a complement to all this, he was experiencing a new happiness in the dawn of his love for Esther Johnson. "Stella"—for by this name which Swift devised for her she will always be known—was now fifteen, and her disposition growing more and more sympathetic to his own. Looking on him at first only as "guide, philosopher and friend," her feelings gradually deepened into a devotion that was absolutely unselfish. However deeply he may have realised this, Swift would never allow that he

felt more than a dear friend could feel towards her. He never disguised the pleasure he derived from her society and her quick sympathy with all ideas. She was content with what he gave her, schooled herself in every way to please him, and fed hungrily on such affection as he showed her.

He has been set down by some as a man incapable of real love, and blamed for deliberately allowing others to give him what he could not return. This is scarcely just. He did not permit himself to be a passionate lover, but there is little to show that he lacked the impulse. On the contrary, there is much in what occurred later in his life to suggest that he purposely schooled himself against the promptings of his heart, for reasons that had a terrible significance to him. He undoubtedly was attractive to women, and this alone should dispose of the idea that he had not the makings of a lover in him.

Under these more congenial conditions, Swift dashed vigorously into the arena of literary controversy. His *Tale of a Tub* was not yet finished ; but meanwhile, in 1697, he published his first satire of importance, *The Battle of the Books*. This was prompted by a discussion that was being fiercely carried on respecting the genuineness of some supposed classical epistles, and the respective merits of ancient and modern writers. Swift's satire, though it undoubtedly owed its form and inspiration to a foreign model, attracted unusual attention, and confirmed him in his predilection for that form of writing. In *A Tale of a Tub*, which appeared seven years after this, his satirical powers reached their fullest development. Even the later *Gulliver* is not so full of humour, so shrewd in its observation, so general in its unsparing castigation of

folly and pretence. "Good God! what a genius I had when I wrote that book!" he is reported to have said in after years, on looking back upon the *Tale of a Tub*.

Temple's death, early in 1699, threw Swift upon his own resources. He could not face the prospect of a return to an existence of obscurity as a parish clergyman, nor, indeed, was he now himself so unimportant a figure as to be overlooked by those who had patronage to bestow. His Irish connection, however, was inevitable, and he returned to Dublin in the year of Temple's death as chaplain to Lord Berkeley. After a little while he was at loggerheads with his new patron, owing to the intrigues of the latter's secretary; but a truce was established by Swift's being appointed to a living in County Meath. This was sufficient to give him personal independence; and during the next ten or twelve years his time was divided between residence at his cure, attendance at Dublin Castle, and visits to England.

Shortly after the Irish living was given to him, he induced Stella to remove (with her duenna, Mrs. Dingley) to Ireland. They took up their abode within easy reach of his, and often inhabited his vicarage when he was away. Conscious of the unconventionality of his friendship with Stella, he was jealously careful of avoiding anything that could appear to compromise her. That theirs was more than an ordinary friendship was obvious to all; and he was not sufficiently her elder—he was now three-and-thirty and she nineteen—to let him assume the privileges of a guardian. Nor, indeed, did he seem to wish this. His attitude to her before the world was that of a devoted friend, even a devoted suitor. Another suitor who presented himself was informed of this by Swift in unmistake-

able terms ; at the same time he was scrupulous in avoiding the slightest breach of the *convenances*, even to the extreme of rarely seeing her except in the presence of some third person. Between themselves there was evidently an understanding. Stella had given him her heart unreservedly, but acquiesced, as she did in everything he directed, in his decision that no definite bond should be formed between them, at least until he should have reached a position very different from what he then filled.

His visits to London, where he was making a number of influential friends, were much concerned with his hopes of preferment in the Church ; and besides this he found a keen enjoyment in the companionship of men of letters. Addison, Steele, Pope, Congreve and Gay were among his intimates. Politics, too, claimed his pen, and he was vigorous in pamphleteering. Especially was this so between the years 1710 and 1713, when he lived almost uninterruptedly in London. He has left a vivid picture of his life at this time in the *Journal to Stella*, a species of diary written in tender and playful style to send to his friend during his absence from her. "I am very busy, and can hardly find time to write," he wrote in October 1711 ; "I have sent . . . three pamphlets out in a fortnight. I will ply the rogues warm ; and whenever anything of theirs makes a noise, it shall have an answer."

His activity bore good fruit, and in April 1713 he could write to Stella : "At three, Lord Treasurer sent to me to come to his lodgings at St. James's, and told me the queen was at last resolved that Dr. Sterne should be Bishop of Dromore, and I Dean of St. Patrick's". Two months later he set off to Dublin to take up the duties of the Deanery.

A more embarrassing fruit of these three years in London was the beginning of his acquaintance with another woman who was destined to become inextricably bound up with his life and be immortalised as his "Vanessa". His love of intelligent female society had led him to be much in the company of a Mrs. Vanhomrigh, widow of a former Lord Mayor of Dublin, who was settled in London. Her daughter, Hester, was fascinated by his brilliant parts, and only too readily allowed herself to come under the spell of this extraordinary man, who had, as it has been justly said, "a fatal fondness for playing the mentor to women and improving their minds," taking little account of the possible effect upon their hearts. Hester Vanhomrigh became his "Vanessa," according to his whim of concocting fanciful pet names for his friends, just as Miss Waring, in earlier years, had been "Varina". "Stella" was, of course, merely a translation of the Christian name of Esther Johnson; and he himself became "Cadenus" to his Vanessa, "Cadenus" being a transposed form of the title "Decanus," Latin for "Dean".

The attitude of Swift's mind and heart to Stella and Vanessa respectively will always remain something of a puzzle. That both were unreservedly in love with him is certain; but, as far as we can judge, Stella undoubtedly held the firmer grasp upon his heart and sympathies, in spite of his divagations of sentiment in Vanessa's favour. The latter appears to have aroused little genuine emotion in him. Her wit interested him, and he found satisfaction in her society, but that he felt no love for her is clear. Before he left London to go to his Deanery, Vanessa had betrayed her feelings to him. He endeavoured to reason her out of the idea that anything closer than friendship was

possible between them ; and if anything were necessary to show how untouched his heart was, the proof could be found in the poem "Cadenus and Vanessa," in which he half seriously gave an account of the episode. In it he says of Cadenus that

> Love, hitherto a transient guest,
> Ne'er held possession of his breast;
> But friendship in its greatest height,
> A constant rational delight,
> Which gently warms but cannot burn,
> He gladly offers in return;
> His want of passion will redeem
> With gratitude, respect, esteem.

When he went back to Dublin in 1713, Swift may well have hoped that separation from Vanessa would cool her ardour ; but, to his dismay, after her mother's death in the following year, she followed him to Ireland. Once there, she could scarcely remain in ignorance of his attachment to Stella, nor Stella of the existence of this rival. The Dean, who had thus drifted into a most undesirable complication, exercised all his ingenuity in endeavouring to temporise with Vanessa. His kindness of disposition led him for some time to adopt an attitude which may appear cowardly. While his heart was really given to Stella, he had reasons of his own for not wishing to bind himself in marriage. He had a morbid dread of connecting her with his struggles in daily life ; for he exercised the severest parsimony, as far as himself was concerned, in order to have means to procure relief to those in his parish. Moreover, there can be little doubt that his premonitions of mental trouble, which was destined to overtake him, made him consider marriage as in his case out of the question. On the other hand, he had not the heart to shatter Vanessa's hopes of happiness ; and for a time,

perhaps unwittingly, he allowed her to imagine that they were not without some prospect of realisation.

Eventually, however, he was driven into a corner, and saw that he must be "cruel to be kind". Vanessa was made to understand that he could never be more than a friend to her, and she promised to respect the conditions he laid down if they were to continue their intimacy. With Stella he took a more decided step, and, as the evidence seems conclusively to show, secretly married her in the year 1716, but with the proviso that the union was to be merely nominal and that they were to live apart as before.

Stella agreed to this, as she would have agreed to anything that he required. "With all the softness of temper that became a lady, she had the personal courage of a hero," he wrote of her after her death; and she needed that courage now. Imagining that his compact with Vanessa had settled all difficulties with that more exacting lady, he imprudently continued his visits to her for some years after his marriage to Stella. Neither of the two women could be ignorant of the other's occupying a large share in his life; but, while Stella felt secure of him, Vanessa's love grew more and more ardent and rebellious. Eventually the latter brought about the inevitable catastrophe by writing to Stella to ask her if it were true that she was married to Swift. Stella acknowledged the fact, and sent Vanessa's letter to Swift. His indignation at the means she had chosen, and his wrathful contempt at her violation of their compact and the indignity to which she had submitted Stella, showed the unhappy Vanessa only too plainly where his heart was fixed. The shock was too much for her, and she died a few weeks afterwards.

Five years later Stella died. Swift's torture of mind as he saw her health fading was extreme. It was too late now to think that acknowledgment of their marriage could be of any use ; and he could but slightly relieve his distress by any mention of it to his friends, for fear he should compromise her by too deep a show of feeling. In a letter written to a friend in Ireland, anxiously inquiring news of her illness at a time when he was in London, he pathetically says : "I am of opinion that there is not a greater folly than to contract too great and intimate a friendship, which must always leave the survivor miserable".

Stella died in January 1728, while Swift was on his way back to Ireland ; and his record of her, written in his journal after he received the news, is a touching evidence, if evidence were needed, to the depth of his affection.

In the midst of all this tangle of his private life came two of Swift's greatest public successes. The one, in 1724, was the publication of two letters, signed with the pseudonym "M. B. Drapier," dealing with certain political abuses to which Ireland was exposed in the matter of finance. These letters had an overwhelming effect, both in checkmating the particular intrigue at which they were aimed and in winning for Swift unbounded popularity in Ireland. His other success was the appearance, two years later, of *Gulliver's Travels*. This book, matchless in satirical fiction and as enjoyable for the sake of its sheer fun as for its application as a commentary upon affairs of the time, was greeted with a chorus of applause that has never since died away.

After Stella's death Swift sank into a morose and cynical state of mind, which ended not many years

later in the complete wreck of his brain. For a time he held his old intellectual position among his friends, who were many, and his pride helped him to dissimulate the bitterness that ate at his heart. "He was proud beyond all other men that I have seen," one of his friends wrote of him. In 1731 Swift wrote to Pope: "Life is not a farce; it is a ridiculous tragedy, which is the worst kind of composition".

Between the scenes of the "ridiculous tragedy" he yet found the power to write occasionally in the ironical vein, while at the same time he carried on an untiring warfare against oppression and corrupt administration in Ireland. A characteristic example of the manner in which he employed satire to enforce the truth indirectly is found in his *Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland from being a Burden to their Parents*, the "proposal" being that the parents should fatten their children and eat them!

In 1742 his mental condition became so serious that it was necessary to appoint guardians to take charge of him and his affairs; and three years later, after a miserable period of helpless childishness, the once brilliant brain found rest in death. He was buried in his own cathedral, close to where Stella lay.

In the history of literature there is no more tragic page than this life of a man forced by inevitable circumstances, as he honestly believed, to deny himself what his heart craved; to hide his warmth of feeling beneath a mask of pride, and his kindness under an assumed churlishness; and all his life to foresee the shattering of mental powers as brilliant as any man had ever enjoyed. Thackeray's words of him are true: "To think of Swift is like thinking of the ruin of a great empire".

VI.

POPE.

POPE'S career has been called "a singular triumph of pure intellect over external disadvantages". It is also an instance, at any rate in its earlier years, of the manner in which circumstances apparently disadvantageous to a man's career may in the end prove to have been fortunate. Born of Catholic parents, at a time when Catholics laboured under the severest disabilities he was debarred from what would be ordinarily considered the best schooling, as well as, later, from the exercise of any learned profession; while the fact that both his parents were nearly fifty when he was born meant to him a feeble frame and a sickly constitution. There was, however, a comforting reverse to the picture. His desultory education was probably far more suited to his delicate physique and precocious mind than the rough and ready public-school system would have been; the fact that his religion was a bar to every other learned profession obviously pointed out the pursuit of letters as the means by which he could compel fame; and his birth so late in his parents' life, when they were already in easy circumstances, enabled them to surround their child with a devoted attention which he never ceased to reciprocate as long as they lived. Spoilt child as Pope may have remained all his life,

fretful and resentful as he may often have shown himself to others, his respect and devotion to his father and mother never altered.

He was born, probably in London, on 21st May 1688. Soon afterwards his father gave up his merchant's business and removed to Binfield, near Windsor Forest. In these pleasant surroundings Pope's boyhood must have been happy. He is said to have been a pretty boy, but so unnaturally quick of mind and so ardent a reader that his mental energies threatened to wear out those of his body. Such school days as he had were of short duration, for when he was twelve years old his father called him home. He had learnt something from the master of a private school at Twyford, and a little more at a school in London; but evidently his parents feared to let him be long away from them.

At home he read everything he could lay hands on, and was not slow in coming to the determination that a poet's career should be his ambition. The knack of writing in verse came easily to him, and he improved his facility by diligent study of such models as Spenser and Dryden, particularly the latter. His famous saying that he "lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came" was not very far from the mark; certainly verses seem to have been his amusement almost as soon as he could read. He is said to have been sent away from his first school for lampooning the master; and at his second, before he was twelve, he gained a reputation as a dramatist by concocting, out of passages from a popular translation of the *Iliad*, a classical tragedy which was enacted by himself, his schoolfellows, and the school gardener! When he went home his greatest recreation was to attempt verse translations after the

manner so popular at the time; and before he was fifteen he had embarked upon an epic poem of enormous dimensions. By the time he was seventeen his life was seriously threatened by a breakdown in his health, and he owed his recovery to the good sense of a doctor who, on being consulted, prescribed long rides in the forest and an absolute cessation for a time from both reading and writing.

Confident in his powers, and determined upon his aim in life, Pope began to crave the society of other men of letters, of whom he fully imagined himself to be one. Here again unpromising circumstances stood him in good stead. The very fact of the comparative isolation in which they were compelled to live bred a fellow-feeling between Catholic families, and made Catholics the more ready to help one of their own faith. Thus it was that Pope was fortunate in his friends; who, besides the recognition of the boy's gifts, were well disposed to help one who seemed to promise evidence to the world that a Catholic could rise to eminence in spite of all disadvantages.

Sir William Trumbull, an old diplomatist, William Walsh the critic, and Wycherley the dramatist were among Pope's earliest patrons. To Wycherley Pope attached himself with the greatest fidelity, regardless of the old rake's character so long as he could introduce him to the world of wits in London. Even when fame had come to him, and he could have stood firm by himself, Pope seems to have always felt the necessity of some strong arm to lean upon. His physical drawbacks and his morbid sensitiveness had probably much to do with this. No sooner had the influence of one strong character upon him died away than another took its place. Sir William Trumbull, Wycherley,

Walsh, Gay, Arbuthnot, Swift, Bolingbroke, succeeded one another as friends to whom, whatever he was to the rest of the world, he was affectionate and loyal. "I never in my life knew a man that had so tender a heart for his particular friends," one of them wrote after his death. His unchanging gratitude and devotion to his parents has already been alluded to.

From the time when Pope was fairly launched upon the career of letters, the episodes of his life are almost altogether concerned with his successes there. His first publication was a set of "Pastorals" that were printed in Tonson's *Miscellany* in 1709. These verses were deliberate imitations of the style of Dryden, and not much more than poetical exercises. At the same time they already showed that Pope had acquired ease in versification and a prolific vocabulary. Two years later he published his poetical *Essay on Criticism*. This is a curious combination of genuine reflection and pompously stated truisms. It is a remarkable work for so young a man, particularly from the fact that, at an age when the average young poet is finely disdainful of all limitations, Pope was guided by a scrupulous carefulness. His early mentor, William Walsh, is said to have impressed the habit of accuracy upon him, saying that "there had never yet been a great poet that was correct," a quality which Walsh very rightly held to be inseparable from a good style. The *Essay on Criticism* is mainly remembered now by one or two very familiar quotations; though probably not one person in twenty of those who frequently use the aphorisms "Fools rush in where Angels fear to tread," or "A little learning is a dangerous thing," could state their origin. The *Essay* lays down most

sensible rules for good literary workmanship, and Pope himself obeyed them rigidly, knowing that

> True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
> As those move easiest who have learnt to dance.

though, to quote again from the *Essay*,

> Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see
> Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be.

Not long after this, great offence was caused in the circles in which Pope moved by a practical joke played upon a Miss Fermor by a youthful peer, Lord Petre, who had cut off a lock of her hair. The incident, trivial in itself, threatened to embroil two families, till Pope was prevailed upon by a friend to make good-humoured fun of the whole affair in what Johnson calls "the most airy, the most ingenious, and the most delightful of all his compositions". This, *The Rape of the Lock*, was first printed anonymously in 1712, and two years later, with considerable additions and a dedication to Miss Fermor, under the author's name. It is one of the most brilliant examples of mock-heroic verse in the language; and, though written as an "occasional" trifle, very markedly increased Pope's reputation as a poet.

Shortly after this Pope made Swift's acquaintance, and thus began a long and firm friendship. When Swift was with Sir William Temple at Moor Park, he was not very far from Binfield, where Pope spent his boyhood; but they do not seem to have met until now. With Gay, Arbuthnot, Congreve and other kindred wits, they formed a society whose members bound themselves to a crusade against pretentious authority and pedantry in literary matters. This they called the Scriblerus Club; and it was at the sugges-

tion of some of its members, who looked upon him as the legitimate successor of Dryden in the field of classical translation, that Pope undertook his translation of Homer. The list of subscribers which appears in the first volume shows how secure Pope's position now was. His audacity in attacking the task was almost justified by his success. He had scarcely any knowledge of Greek, and relied on his predecessors in the same path to show him the meaning of what he translated. Ogilby's and Chapman's versions were probably his chief refuge. But so quick was he to grasp the sense, and so apt with his verse, that he produced a work which was for long looked upon as a masterpiece of translation, which it was not. "A very pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer," was Bentley's shrewd estimate of it. The six volumes of the *Iliad* appeared between 1715 and 1720, and were so great a financial success that Pope decided to follow them with a translation of the *Odyssey*. He appears to have been wearied of translation, however, and arranged with two Cambridge scholars, William Broome and Elijah Fenton, to help him. Between them these two did half the work on the *Odyssey;* and Pope's disinclination, when the time came for publication, to admit how great a share they had taken in the translation gave rise to serious ill-feeling between them, which was not diminished by Pope's ungenerous evasions when pressed to acknowledge the truth. The *Odyssey* appeared in 1725 and 1726.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 1716, his parents had left Binfield and settled at Chiswick. His father died in the following year, and shortly afterwards Pope took the villa at Twickenham in which he lived

till his death. Here in his leisure hours he delighted himself with landscape gardening and the laying out of a "grotto," pursuits in which he engaged with the half-sincere and half-counterfeit eagerness characteristic of the time. His mother lived till 1733, surrounded by every comfort that this queer, loving son of hers could provide for her. Pope's grief at her death was profound. A beautiful letter from his friend Swift shows how real Pope's love for her had been. Rather than mourn, Swift says, Pope should rather feel happiness at the thought that "she died in extreme old age, without pain, under the care of the most dutiful son I have ever known or heard of, which is a felicity not happening to one in a million".

It is perhaps not altogether fanciful to connect her death with the change that took place in the character of Pope's writings. His nature was essentially dependent, and actually affectionate, but his morbid sensitiveness rendered him suspicious of even his best friends. With his father and mother he had no such fears, and towards them his affection found an unhindered outlet. When they were taken from him, the bitter side of a disposition that had been "spoilt" since his youth gained unfortunate ascendency. He was for ever casting about to discover motives which had no existence, and gave rein to a mischievous delight in tormenting others that probably had its source in his own sense of his physical disabilities. His coquetting with political intrigues (with which he really had nothing to do) was but a symptom of this same weakness. "He played the politician," said Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, "about cabbages and turnips," and Johnson adds that Pope "could hardly drink tea without a stratagem"

His first satire, *The Dunciad*, appeared in 1728. Satire was the newest fashion in literature, and Pope was not likely to be "out of the movement". Swift had written *Gulliver's Travels;* and Gay, Arbuthnot, Congreve and others of the Scriblerus Club were sharpening their wits in parody and the ridicule of absurd convention. In *The Dunciad* Pope deliberately ran atilt against the smaller fry who had piqued him by their criticism or their abuse; but his ridicule of them is so full of the real spirit of fun, and shows so evidently that he delighted in the opportunity of witty lampoon more than in the pleasure of wounding its objects, that its satire loses much of its malice and is thereby the more effective. In sheer robustness of humour it is an extraordinary effort on the part of a man of "crazy carcass," as he averred he was, a capricious valetudinarian whose weakness might be expected to vent itself merely in spite.

In 1733 appeared the first part of the *Essay on Man*, the work with which Pope's memory is most popularly connected. The idea of writing it seems to have been suggested to him by his friend Bolingbroke. In his preface Pope speaks of it as the first instalment of a series of "pieces on human life and manners" which he proposes to write, and rather pretentiously claims for the *Essay* that its arguments are part of a philosophical scheme that he is elaborating. As a matter of fact, it is an exceedingly clever abstract of the more rationalistic theories of religion that were beginning to prevail among thoughtful men of his day. The first three parts appeared anonymously, but in the following year, when Pope published the concluding part, he avowed his authorship. He was at once attacked as an enemy to orthodoxy, and found a

generous champion in William Warburton, whose defence of him led to a warm friendship between them, lasting till Pope's death. Gay and Arbuthnot were dead, Swift away in Ireland, and Bolingbroke gone to France; so that Pope, whose health was beginning to fail, was all the more glad of a friend upon whose robust assistance he could lean.

The account of his physical condition by this time is pitiable. So weak was he, says Johnson, that he was in perpetual need of attendance. "When he rose, he was invested in bodices of stiff canvas, being scarce able to hold himself erect till they were laced, and he then put on a flannel waistcoat. One side was contracted. His legs were so slender that he enlarged their bulk with three pairs of stockings, which were drawn on and off by the maid, for he was not able to dress or undress himself. His stature was so low that, to bring him to a level with common tables, it was necessary to raise his seat. . . . But his face was not displeasing, and his eyes were animated and vivid."

Pope's ruling passion was the desire for fame. His sensitiveness to criticism was extreme, and he had resort on occasions to discreditable tactics to avoid being made to appear in any but the best light. It is true that he professed insensibility to the attacks of others; but this was as far from being genuine as was his pretended contempt of the great or his professed poor opinion of his own poetry. Of the latter it may be said that he was far too clear-sighted not to know that he wrote well. He wrote to please himself; chose his own subjects, working without haste and with scrupulous care; and submitted all that he did to a criticism that was as keen as though the work had been that of another.

In his nature there was a considerable admixture of cunning, as is not unusual with the deformed. A characteristic instance of his giving way to this occurred over the publication of his correspondence. So much intriguing and counter-intriguing went on in this connection that the truth of the affair is wrapped in some doubt ; but apparently Pope, having got the letters together, retouched and altered them where he thought fit, so as to show himself uniformly in a favourable light ; then conveyed the originals safely away, and offered the publisher a printed copy of his version of them ; and, after their publication, contrived to spread abroad the report that it was unauthorised by him, and that he was not responsible for the form in which the letters appeared.

He is described as a liberal and faithful friend to those who could put up with his fretful manner and somewhat lugubrious company. He was never married, and women (except his mother) seem to have played but a small part in his life. He was for a few years on terms of intimate friendship with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whose wit attracted him. Their acquaintance ended in a sudden quarrel, occasioned, according to one account, by her having construed an extravagant profession of his admiration for her in somewhat too literal a fashion, or, according to another, by the return to him of a pair of sheets, which he had lent to the Montagus, unwashed !

The only episode in Pope's life that had any likeness to a love affair was his long friendship with two sisters of the name of Blount, of whom the younger, Martha, was his favourite. Marriage with one in his physical condition was out of the question ; but for some thirty years his intimacy with Martha Blount was close and

My Lord

Decemb^r 3. 1714.

While you are doing Justice to all the World, I beg you will not forget Homer, if you can spare an hour to attend his cause. I leave him with you in that hope, and return home full of acknowledgments for the Favors your L^dship has done me, and for those you are pleasd to intend me. I distrust neither your Will, nor your Memory, when it is to do Good: and if for [redacted] I become troublesome or solliciteous, it must not be out of Expectation, but out of Gratitude. Your Lordship may either cause me to live agreably in the Towne, or contentedly in the Country, which is really all the Difference I sett between an Easy Fortune and a small one. It is indeed a high Strain of Generosity in you, to think of making me easie all my Life, only because I have been so happy as to divert you an hour or two; But if I may have leave to add, because you think me no Enemy to my Country there will appear a better Reason, for I must be of consequence, as I sincerely am,

My Lord Y^r most obliged, most obedient, & faithful humble Servant

A. Pope.

ALEXANDER POPE.

Facsimile (reduced) of a Letter to the Earl of Halifax. (Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 7,121, f. 43.)

[Face page 67.

affectionate, and towards the end of his life he owed a great deal to her attentive care. Generous provision was made for her in his will.

Some *Epistles and Satires*, the *Imitations of Horace*, and a fourth book of *The Dunciad* were the only new works of importance during the last ten years of Pope's life. He busied himself with new editions of some of his works, and with the publication of his correspondence which has been already mentioned. The collapse of his health was rapid at the end, and probably accelerated by his own imprudence. He died at Twickenham, peacefully and painlessly, on 30th May 1744, and was buried beside his parents in Twickenham Church. Almost the last words of this strange man, who had been so abused for his malignity, were affectionate remarks or inquiries about his friends. It seemed, as Bolingbroke said, as if "his humanity had survived his understanding".

VII.

JOHNSON.

SAMUEL JOHNSON is a conspicuous instance of how a man's memory may indirectly suffer from exhaustive biography. Hundreds who have never read Boswell are nevertheless familiar with a number of the anecdotes his *Life of Johnson* includes ; and unfortunately the anecdotes most popularly known are mainly illustrative of the uncouth or the combative side of Johnson, while little can be gathered from them of the generosity, the scrupulous uprightness and the tenderness of the man, who, as Mrs. Thrale said, had nothing of the bear about him except the skin.

The son of a well-to-do bookseller, who was a magistrate and sheriff of his county, Johnson was born at Lichfield on 18th September 1709. With a vigorous frame he unfortunately also inherited from his father a disease which marred his constitution and disfigured his features, which were otherwise good. "Touching" for the king's evil (as scrofula was then called) was still believed in ; and Johnson afterwards said that one of his earliest recollections was of his being taken to the queen for this ceremony, "a confused, but somehow solemn recollection of a lady in diamonds and a long black hood". The disease seriously impaired his sight, and a nervous weakness of some kind led to the involuntary grimacings and convulsions that, as he

Sir,

Amidst the importance and multiplicity of affairs in which your great Office engages you I take the liberty of recalling your attention for a moment to Literature, and will ask pardon for the interruption by an apology which your character makes need of.

Mr Hoole, a Gentleman long known and long esteemed in the Indian House, after having translated Tasso, has undertaken Ariosto. Who could be so qualified for his undertaking he has already shewn. It is desired Sir, of your Patron in promoting his proposals, and flatters me to suppose that my testimony may advance his interest.

It is a new thing for a Clerk of the Indian House to manufacture Poets. It is new for a Governour of Bengal to patronise learning. That he may find his ingenuity rewarded, and that learning may flourish under your protection is the wish of,

Sir,

Your most humble Servant,

Sam: Johnson

Jan. 29. 1781

Dr. SAMUEL JOHNSON
Facsimile (reduced) of a Letter to Warren Hastings. (Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 29,196, f. 4. [Face page 78.

grew up, made him so strange a figure. His muscular strength was remarkable, even as a boy; and it was probably this, as much as his undeniable strength of character, that made him a person of some importance at school.

He had most of his early education at the Grammar School at Lichfield. He seems to have outgrown his strength, for he is described as "indolent and unwieldy" when a boy, and little inclined to join in the games of his fellow-scholars, probably because of his short sight. He was a clever boy, though not so precocious as his father made him out to be. His lessons were learnt by fits and starts of application, and a singular clearness of mind, which distinguished him all his life, helped him out of many a difficulty. His favourite recreation was the reading of old romances, of which he is said to have been "immoderately fond".

At sixteen his school days were over; and then came two years at home, helping his father in his business, and reading with avidity everything that he could lay his hands on. He had a prodigious memory, and these two years stored it with information. Indeed, late in his life he told a friend that he thought he knew as much when he was eighteen as he did when he came to be three times that age.

By the kindness of some friends in Lichfield he was sent to Oxford in 1728, and spent a somewhat turbulent three years at Pembroke College. His vigorous independence of mind made him resent the restrictions of authority, and his sensitiveness led him to exaggerate the ridicule into which he imagined his poverty brought him at the hands of the other students. Fits of depression alternated with outbreaks of riotous conduct; and, altogether, Johnson's Oxford career does not seem

to have been of much profit to him. "I was mad and violent," he said years afterwards to a friend who alluded to his college life; "it was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit; so I disregarded all power and all authority."

In one important direction, however, his ideas underwent a complete change while he was at college. His religious views were lax and his professions of free-thought full of the defiance of youth, until he came across Law's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. This book produced an extraordinary effect upon him, and for the rest of his life there was a deeply religious element in his character, even to the extent of his constantly reproaching himself for shortcomings in this respect.

He left Oxford at the end of 1729 without having taken a degree, probably because he was too poor to continue his residence. His father, who was no man of business, had allowed his affairs to go from bad to worse, and was now on the brink of bankruptcy. Two years later he died, leaving almost nothing behind him. Samuel Johnson's share of the inheritance amounted to £20, and with this he had to face the world and make a living.

With the greatest unwillingness, he turned his thoughts towards the occupation of schoolmaster. He feared the drudgery and hated the idea of the restrictions, but at least it would provide a livelihood. Even here he met with difficulties, for one schoolmaster refused to employ him on account of his nervous trick of distorting his face, fearing that it would excite the boys to laughter. Eventually, he obtained a wretched

post as usher in a small school, but threw it up in disgust after a few months' misery.

Fortunately an old schoolfellow, who lived in Birmingham, came to his rescue with an introduction to a Birmingham bookseller, who gave him a few small jobs in the way of literary hack-work. Johnson somehow contrived to subsist for a year or two in this manner, probably a good deal helped by friends, and in any case a little less miserable now that he was his own master.

When he was six-and-twenty he took the astonishing step of marrying a widow of forty-eight. According to one who saw her, she was very fat, painted her cheeks, and dressed and talked ridiculously. Johnson's short sight may have made her appear more attractive in his eyes than the reality warranted; but she must have been a woman of sound common sense and considerable discernment, for Johnson not only was happy with her, but valued her praise of his work more than that of any one else. She, on her part, saw immediately through his uncouth manner to the sterling goodness that lay beneath it, for she said to her daughter, after her first meeting with Johnson, that he was "the most sensible man she had ever met". They must have made an odd-looking couple, for he is described as being at this time "lean and lanky, scarred with scrofula, and full of odd motions and turns". His wife lived for seventeen years after their marriage, and after her death he mourned her with a sincerity that left no doubt of the blank her loss made in his life.

When they were married she possessed a few hundred pounds, and with this they resolved to set up a school. Accordingly, in the issues of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for June and July 1736, there appeared the

following advertisement: "At Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded and taught the Latin and Greek languages by Samuel Johnson". The school was started, but its life only lasted a year and a half. A very small number of pupils was attracted, and it was evident that teaching was as uncongenial to Johnson as anything could be. It was, however, an important event in his life as beginning his acquaintance with David Garrick, who came to him as a pupil, and, after the school was given up, went to London with his former pedagogue that they might both seek their fortunes. A local dignitary of Lichfield gave them a letter of introduction to a friend in London, in which Johnson is said to be "a very good scholar and poet"; and mentioned as wishing "to try his fate with a tragedy and to see to get himself employed in some translation either from the Latin or the French"

In March 1737 the two set out for London, Mrs. Johnson following a few months later. The tragedy mentioned in the recommendatory letter was *Irene*, which Johnson had written at Edial with the idea of trying his fortune with it in London, tragedy being the fashion of the hour. It was, however, an undeniably tedious composition, and it is not surprising that it was refused when he offered it at Drury Lane. Twelve years later, when Garrick was a famous actor and Johnson a well-known man, it was produced by the former at Drury Lane.

His early days in London were a period of the severest struggle. Privations and difficulties were borne by him with a stout heart, but they left their traces. Want of the refinements of life made him a sloven, and the slights and rebuffs he had to endure

made him quick to take offence. He was no political pamphleteer, to gain the ear of the great and earn their pay by using his pen in their behalf, nor would his natural honesty have assented to any such course. At the same time, he could not reach the ear of the reading public, and starvation stared him in the face. There were days when he could not even pay for a bed, and then he and his friend Savage used to tramp the streets all night, keeping themselves warm by patriotic declamation and invectives against their *bête noire* Walpole!

Fortunately, about a year after he came to London, Johnson obtained regular employment on the *Gentleman's Magazine*, chiefly in writing reports (more or less imaginary) of the Parliamentary debates. The pay he received for this, and for occasional pieces of translation, served to keep him alive, and in the same year (1738) he published his poem *London*, an imitation of a satire of Juvenal. *London* appeared anonymously, but within a week a second edition was called for, and the little world of letters was agog to find the author. There were those who said that a superior to Pope had arisen, and Pope himself was generous in his praise of the poem. Moreover, when the authorship was declared and the author's poverty known, Pope used his best endeavours to induce Swift (who was then in Dublin) to persuade the Irish University to present Johnson with a degree, in order to render him eligible for a grammar-school mastership. Johnson felt that even a return to the drudgery of teaching would, for the security it offered against want, be preferable to "starving to death in translating for booksellers"; but the application was unsuccessful, and Johnson was forced to rely only upon his own efforts with the pen.

Two years after the publication of *London* Johnson published another similar satire, *The Vanity of Human Wishes.* For both of these his own experiences of Grub Street (the literary Bohemia of the day) furnished considerable matter, or at any rate went some way towards prompting the attitude their author takes up towards the problems of everyday life. Satires, however, were not profitable ; and Johnson, now that his name was becoming known among men of letters, turned his eyes covetously towards the stage, which was the quarter in which authorship was then most lucrative. It was the fashion to attend the theatre, and the dullest dramas were endured from a sense of duty. To this Johnson owed the fact that when his tragedy *Irene* was produced at Drury Lane in 1749, through the friendly offices of Garrick, it ran long enough to procure Johnson a substantial sum—some three hundred pounds—which we may well believe was welcome.

A year or two previous to this he had conceived the idea of the English Dictionary with which his memory has been more permanently connected than with any other of his works. He was under no delusion as to the nature of the task. It was sublimated hack-work, but it would be profitable to him both in money and reputation. Some of the leading booksellers combined to finance the scheme, and Johnson set to work upon it in 1747. He was to receive fifteen hundred guineas for the *Dictionary*, and was sanguine of completing it in three years. As a matter of fact it occupied him for nearly eight years ; and before it was finished the whole sum agreed upon, and more, had been advanced. He had been obliged to employ several humbler brethren of his craft to help him in

the more mechanical part of the work, and their pay, combined with his own needs and domestic troubles, swallowed up the money.

Three years before the *Dictionary* was finished his wife died, too soon to see his fame, as he would dearly have wished, too soon even to know the happier days that would have come with easier circumstances. His grief was as deep as his tenderness for her had always been, and to the end of his life he never alluded to his "dear Letty" without some affectionate word.

While he had the *Dictionary* upon his hands he found time to publish a periodical upon the lines of Addison's *Spectator*. The *Rambler*, as Johnson's journal was called, appeared twice a week for two years, but came abruptly to an end at the time when Mrs. Johnson's illness took so serious a turn that the doctors gave up hope of her. It had little of the brilliance of the *Spectator*, but it pleased the literary taste of its day, and no doubt increased Johnson's reputation with the reading public. The *Dictionary* and the *Rambler* between them gave him an almost undisputed position as the head of the profession of letters, a profession in which he was one of the first to become eminent for purely literary, as apart from political, reasons.

Another blow was in store for him in the death of his aged mother in 1759. The loss could not have been altogether unexpected, as she was ninety years old; but it left Johnson altogether without family ties, and this could not but mournfully affect one naturally so affectionate as he. To pay the expenses of his mother's funeral and settle her affairs, he forced himself to set to work and write something for the booksellers; and in a week had finished a romance, written at white heat, and sent off to the printers almost without

revision. This was *Rasselas* (or *The Prince of Abyssinia*, as it at first was called). The fact that Johnson received £100 for the copyright shows that by this time he could command fair terms for his work ; but his carelessness, added to his open-handed generosity, resulted in his usually being in straits for money.

The accession of George III. to the throne, and the consequent ascendency of the Tories, made a momentous difference to Johnson's fortunes. Lord Bute, who wished to pose as a Mæcenas, offered him a pension of £300 a year, which Johnson gratefully accepted after some hesitation. He had inveighed against pensions when the Whigs had been in power, and had defined "pension" in his *Dictionary* as being "generally understood to mean pay given to a State hireling for treason to his country" ; but upon Tory assurances that the offer was made to him solely on the score of his services to literature, he wisely took advantage of so timely a favour.

The independence that he thus gained told rather unfortunately upon his work. Whether as a result of a constitutional indolence which poverty had hitherto obliged him to overcome, or of the reaction from years of drudgery, he certainly took full advantage of his new opportunities for laziness. For some ten or twelve years he produced no original work worth the name. Indeed, it needed the sting of a satirical attack from a rival poet to make him fulfil an engagement, entered upon some years before, to edit the plays of Shakespeare. He had been living for a considerable time on the money furnished by the subscriptions to this edition, and it was only when he realised that his honesty was being called into question that he was able to rouse himself to the effort to finish it. In the

twenty-two years that he lived after the pension was granted him he only published two works of importance, the *Journey to the Hebrides* in 1775, and the *Lives of the Poets* in 1779. He lived as he pleased, and wrote when he pleased, which was seldom ; and when Boswell remarked to him that he "wondered that such a master of the pen could find more pleasure in not writing than in writing," he was met with the crushing reply : "Sir, you *may* wonder".

As a matter of fact, his life during these twenty years allowed the development of the Johnson that we know so well from Boswell. While physically lazy, he took a delight in kindling the activity of his mind. He deliberately cultivated the art of conversation, and thoroughly enjoyed his position as Dictator of the World of Letters. His absolute downrightness and his abhorrence of exaggeration and affectation were at the bottom of the brusqueness of retort that is the foundation of the typical Johnson anecdote. It must not be forgotten that at the same time he could be very tender—women who knew him bore witness to that—and was the soul of generosity. His house became an asylum of refuge for the strangest imaginable collection of poor dependents. At one time he harboured in it two poor old ladies (one of them blind), the daughter of one of these, another "reduced gentlewoman," and a rather disreputable old quack doctor. They presumed grossly on Johnson's goodness, and frequently made his own house unbearable to him ; but he bore it all for the sake of being able to help them. Two pleasant traits recorded of him are his love for children, and his solicitude for his favourite cat. The Johnson who put pennies into the hands of sleeping street-arabs in order that they could buy

breakfast when they woke up, who took papers of sweetmeats to his child friends, or went out himself to buy oysters for his cat rather than make it unpopular with his servants, is a different Johnson from the self-assertive, slovenly, clumsy-mannered "Big Bear" of the anecdotes. Not that the latter are not as true of the one side of him as the more pleasing records are of the other; his manner must very often have been repellent and sometimes alarming, but none who had sufficient patience to see beneath his eccentricities could know the man that they hid and not love him.

If proof of this were needed, it exists in the friendships which were the delight of the latter part of his life. Hero-worship was no doubt the mainspring of Boswell's devotion to him, but the friendship of the Thrales, Reynolds, Goldsmith, Langton, Burney and a host of others could not be won and held for so long, against the severe odds of the Johnsonian manner, had his nature not been essentially lovable if for no other reason than its transparent honesty.

His acquaintance with Boswell began in the first year of his "life of ease". The great man seems to have been at first annoyed at the pertinacity of his admirer, then to have tolerated it, and finally to have conceived a real regard for him, based on a better knowledge. Though in the early days of their acquaintance Johnson could say to Boswell: "Sir, you have but two subjects, yourself and me; I am sick of both," he could write to him a few years afterwards: "You may settle yourself in full confidence both of my love and my esteem. . . . I have you, as Hamlet has it, 'in my heart of hearts'." Boswell must, to have held Johnson's regard, have been a man of much better parts than his famous work lets us see. His

devotion must in any case have touched Johnson, but the latter's affection could not have stood the strain of Boswell's occasional bursts of childish temper and vanity unless it had had a firm foundation.

Be that as it may, it is not too much to say that, but for Boswell, Johnson would hold a very different place among the famous dead ; for he is famous in spite of the fate of his writings. They are but little read now, and even the memory of his *Dictionary* is obscured by the work of later builders on the foundations he laid ; but the man himself is better known to us than any other figure in the history of literature.

Boswell's greatest triumph was when he induced Johnson (who had always professed himself an inveterate hater of everything Scotch) to visit Scotland in his company. The tour was on the whole a remarkable success, considering the amount of prejudice with which Johnson started and the extreme personal discomfort entailed by such a journey in those days. Johnson's sense of fairness seems to have determined him to admire what he could ; and, though he administered such checks to Boswell's ardour as the dismissal of lofty hills as merely "considerable protuberances," he seems to have taken some pleasure in the grandeur of the scenery. Much that he saw aroused his interest as an antiquary, and unfamiliar manners and customs agreeably disturbed some of his theories. At the same time his opposition was disarmed by the hospitality and genuine deference with which he was everywhere welcomed in the north ; and he even managed to keep his temper with Boswell's old father, whom nothing would reconcile to his son's hero-worship of this "auld dominie".

No mention of Johnson can be complete without

allusion to the "Literary Club," where he ruled imperially. The club was composed of a coterie of distinguished men who, originally at Sir Joshua Reynolds' suggestion, met once a week at a convenient tavern for supper and conversation. Its numbers by degrees included all the distinguished wits of the day, and to be admitted to its circle was an honour that can be appreciated when we realise that Reynolds, Garrick, Burke, Goldsmith, Hawkins, Burney, Gibbon, Adam Smith, Percy, Fox, Sheridan and Malone were all members during Johnson's lifetime.

Next to Boswell's, the names of Henry Thrale and his wife were those most intimately bound up with Johnson's, especially in the last years of his life. He had made the acquaintance of Thrale, who was a wealthy brewer and a man of culture, in 1765, and Thrale's generosity and the assiduous care of his wife made a vast difference to Johnson's happiness. Mrs. Thrale was a woman of spirit and sympathy, and, as long as her husband lived to exercise some control over her impulses, tended their famous friend with a forbearance which he requited with a devotion that was half paternal and half humorously gallant. For fourteen or fifteen years Johnson must have spent quite the half of each year under the Thrales' roof, either at the brewery at Southwark or at their villa at Streatham; until, after her husband's death, his enforced rupture with Mrs. Thrale gave him a shock from which he never recovered. She had fallen in love with an Italian musician, Piozzi, and was set upon marriage with him despite the remonstrances of her children and all her friends. Johnson's disapproval entirely altered her attitude to him. She no longer bore with his trying ways or deferred to his advice, but showed

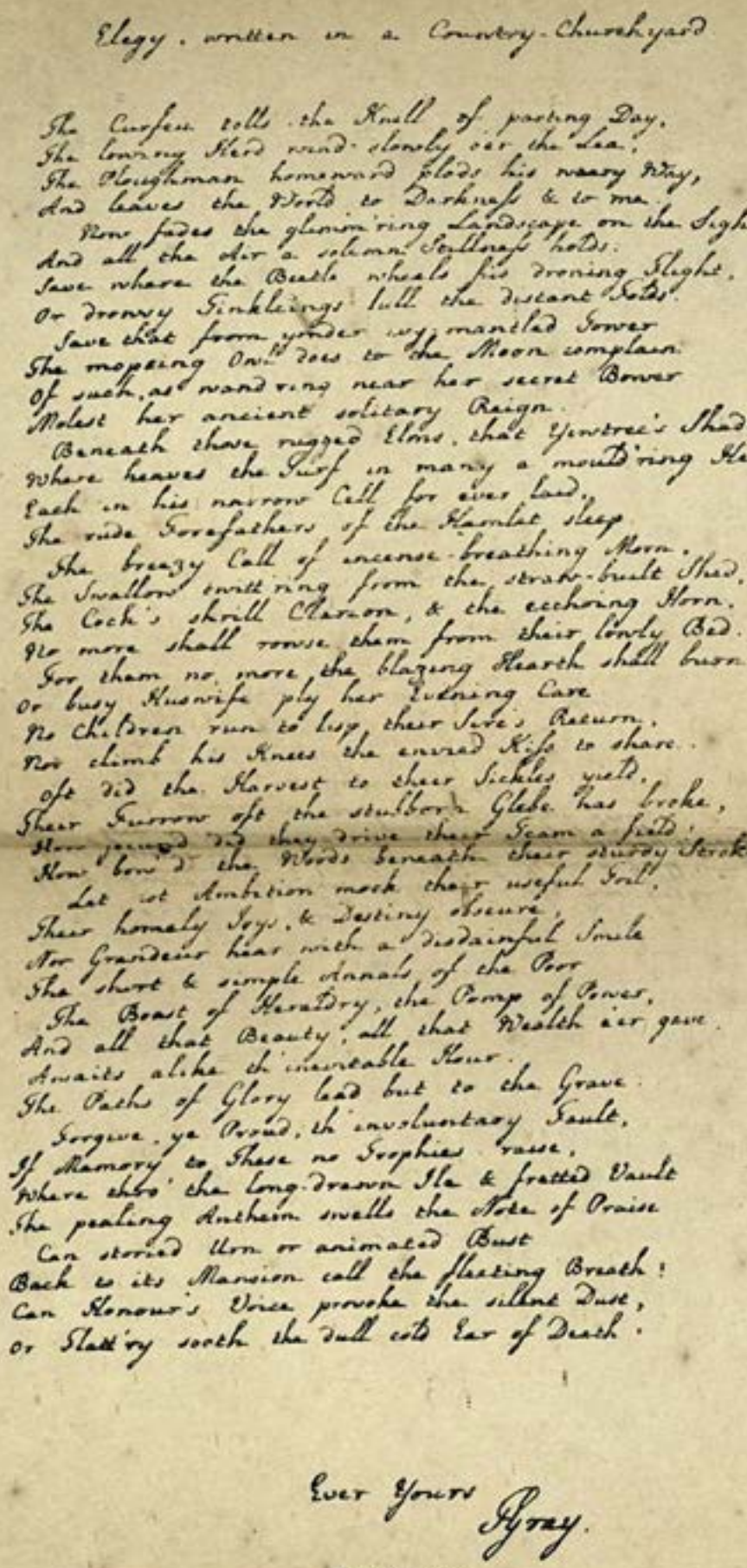
herself plainly impatient of him. So evident did this become that in 1783 he sadly broke with her and returned to his house in Fleet Street, where a paralytic stroke soon heralded the advance of the infirmities which rapidly closed in upon him. Fortunately he was not without friends who did all in their power to relieve his solitude, but his constitution was broken ; and, after a winter of suffering borne with the patience of simple piety, he died on 13th December, 1784. A week later he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

No one has better summed up Johnson's reputation in few words than Macaulay. Writing in 1860, he says : " The memory of other authors is kept alive by their works. But the memory of Johnson keeps many of his works alive. The old philosopher is still among us, in the brown coat with the metal buttons and the shirt which ought to be at the wash, blinking, puffing, rolling his head, drumming with his fingers, tearing his meat like a tiger, and swallowing his tea in oceans. No human being who has been more than seventy years in the grave is so well known to us. And it is but just to say that our intimate acquaintance with what he would himself have called the anfractuosities of his intellect and of his temper serves only to strengthen the conviction that he was both a great and a good man."

VIII.

GRAY.

THAT Johnson should, in a phrase which has become historical, have described Gray as "a mechanical poet" is perhaps not inexplicable. There were personal considerations which might conceivably lead Johnson into an unfair estimate. One was his dislike for Gray's personal fastidiousness, which Johnson mistook for affectation ; and to this we may probably add the fact that Walpole, who was one of Gray's closest friends, was Johnson's pet aversion. A more reasonable cause has been pointed out by Matthew Arnold, namely, that the whole spirit of Gray's poetry is essentially opposed to that of the school of which Dryden, Pope and Johnson himself were prominent disciples. Theirs, he says, was conceived and composed in their *wits;* the *soul* had nothing to do with it. The quality in poetry which we are apt to call "inspiration"—by which we mean the realisation of the physical and spiritual beauties of life—was not present in their work, but abounded in Gray's ; and Arnold is probably right in saying that the explanation of Gray's small output of verse is to be found in the repelling effect a chill atmosphere of formalism exercised upon a sensitive nature. To Gray poetry was an expression of his inner self ; to the Dryden school it was an exercise in literary ability. "If I do not


Elegy. written in a Country Churchyard

The Curfew tolls the Knell of parting Day,
The lowing Herd wind slowly o'er the Lea,
The Ploughman homeward plods his weary Way,
And leaves the World to Darkness & to me.

Now fades the glimm'ring Landscape on the Sight,
And all the Air a solemn Stillness holds,
Save where the Beetle wheels his droning Flight,
Or drowsy Tinklings lull the distant Folds:

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled Tower
The moping Owl does to the Moon complain
Of such, as wand'ring near her secret Bower
Molest her ancient solitary Reign.

Beneath those rugged Elms, that Yew-tree's Shade,
Where heaves the Turf in many a mould'ring Heap,
Each in his narrow Cell for ever laid,
The rude Forefathers of the Hamlet sleep.

The breezy Call of incense-breathing Morn,
The Swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built Shed,
The Cock's shrill Clarion, & the echoing Horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly Bed.

For them no more the blazing Hearth shall burn,
Or busy Housewife ply her evening Care
No Children run to lisp their Sire's Return,
Or climb his Knees the envied Kiss to share.

Oft did the Harvest to their Sickles yield,
Their Furrow oft the stubborn Glebe has broke,
How jocund did they drive their Team afield!
How bow'd the Woods beneath their sturdy Stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful Toil,
Their homely Joys, & Destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful Smile
The short & simple Annals of the Poor.

The Boast of Heraldry, the Pomp of Power,
And all that Beauty, all that Wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th'inevitable Hour.
The Paths of Glory lead but to the Grave.

Forgive, ye Proud, th'involuntary Fault,
If Memory o'er Their Tombs no Trophies raise,
Where thro' the long-drawn Isle & fretted Vault
The pealing Anthem swells the Note of Praise.

Can storied Urn or animated Bust
Back to its Mansion call the fleeting Breath?
Can Honour's Voice provoke the silent Dust,
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold Ear of Death?

Ever Yours
Gray.

THOMAS GRAY.

Facsimile (slightly reduced) from a copy of the *Elegy* made by Gray for Dr. Wharton. (Detached signature from a Letter to Dr. Wharton.) (Brit. Mus., Egerton MS. 2,400, f. 45 and f. 40.)

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write much, it is because I cannot." Gray said to one of his intimates.

His early home life was very unhappy. He was born in Cornhill, in December 1716, of an affectionate mother and a father who was the very reverse. The latter, a wealthy and prosperous man, ill-treated his wife and neglected his family. Mrs. Gray could not live with him ; and she, together with her sister, supported herself by keeping a milliner's shop in the city. What happiness the poet enjoyed in his early boyhood was owing to the kindness of an uncle who lived at Burnham. This uncle and his mother between them contrived to send him to Eton, where the boy made friends with Horace Walpole, who went to school there about the same time. The two lads were much of the same nature ; neither of them robust, and both rather inclined to roaming and day-dreams than to playing games with their fellows. A portrait of Gray painted at this time showed him as "a precocious and not very healthy-looking child," with "broad pale brow, sharp nose and chin, and large eyes".

From Eton Gray went to Cambridge ; and there his disposition to melancholy, which as a boy may have seemed merely a pose, was intensified by the dull routine of the university education of the day. His tastes were all for the classics, which were then little in favour at Cambridge ; and for mathematics, which were so much insisted upon, he had no taste. "It is very possible," he wrote, "that two and two make four, but I would not give four farthings to demonstrate this ever so clearly." His delicate health made it additionally difficult for him to shake off the depression he felt amongst such a "collection of desolate animals," as he described his fellow-collegians. In a

letter to his friend and former schoolfellow, West, he wrote from Cambridge: "When you have seen one of my days, you have seen a whole year of my life; they go round and round like the blind horse in the mill, only he has the satisfaction of fancying he makes a progress and gets some ground; my eyes are open enough to see the same dull prospect". The coarseness of the undergraduate life of the day, too, was unendurable by a youth of refined inclinations and quick mind.

The vacations were far more to his taste. They were spent with his uncle at Burnham, where Gray could wander at will amongst the now familiar Beeches. His description of the scenery in a letter to Walpole is sometimes cited as the earliest expression of the modern feeling of the picturesque. In any case it will bear quotation again, for the sake of the charm of temper it displays. "I have," says Gray, "at the distance of half a mile, through a green lane, a forest (the vulgar call it a common), all my own, at least, as good as so, for I spy no human thing in it but myself. It is a little chaos of mountains and precipices; mountains, it is true, that do not ascend much above the clouds, nor are the declivities quite so amazing as Dover cliffs; but just such hills as people who love their necks as well as I do may venture to climb, and crags that give the eye as much pleasure as if they were more dangerous. Both vale and hill are covered with most venerable beeches, and other very reverend vegetables, that, like most other ancient people, are always dreaming out their old stories to the wind. At the foot of one of these squats ME (il penseroso), and there I grow to the trunk for a whole morning. The timorous hare and sportive squirrel gambol around me like Adam in Paradise before he had an Eve; but

I think he did not use to read Virgil, as I commonly do."

Whenever he was away from Burnham, however, his depression returned. "Low spirits are my true and faithful companions," he wrote to West, and unfortunately he would never follow West's excellent advice that he should take more bodily exercise than he was wont. Like all the clever youth of their day, he and his friends wrote Latin verses while at college. With Walpole and Ashton he published a set of Latin *Hymenæals* in 1736, to celebrate the marriage of the Prince of Wales, and in the following year a long Latin poem of Gray's was printed in *Musæ Etonenses*. He had also essayed English verse in an attempt at a translation of Statius' *Thebaid*.

Eventually, in the autumn of 1738, he left Cambridge, apparently without any definite plan of action. Six months of indecision were brought unexpectedly to a close by a generous offer from Walpole that they should together make the "grand tour" on the continent, Walpole bearing all the expenses. Gray gladly agreed, and in the spring of 1739 they set off for Paris. The position of Walpole's father ensured his son a welcome abroad, and his means enabled the journey to be undertaken with leisurely comfort. For two years Gray was probably happier than ever before in his life, or after. The two friends visited France, Switzerland and Italy, and everywhere Gray delighted in the new impressions he was receiving. The wit and refinement of the best French society, the grandeur of the Alps, the feasts of music to be enjoyed in Italy, all appealed to different sides of his nature. His wit and his alert mind we know from his letters, where we see, too, that he was one of the first of his day

to realise the natural beauties of scenery; and music was all his life his favourite recreation. He became, while in Italy, especially enthusiastic over the composer Pergolesi (who was not long dead), and was one of the first to introduce his music into England.

It is almost every one's experience that journeys are the severest test of friendship, and Gray's was no exception to the rule. It is not wonderful that two young men of dissimilar temperaments should, however good friends to start with, quarrel after two years' incessant companionship, during which time they had been sometimes for long periods thrown entirely upon each other's society. In April 1741 they parted company, and Gray returned home alone in September of the same year.

Whatever was the immediate cause of the quarrel, there can be no doubt that Walpole was chiefly to blame. This he frankly admitted in a letter written after Gray's death to Mason, who was writing a life of Gray. "I am conscious," he says, "that in the beginning of the differences between Gray and me the fault was mine. I was too young, too fond of my own diversions, nay, I do not doubt, too much intoxicated by indulgence, vanity, and the insolence of my situation as Prime Minister's son, not to have been inattentive and insensible to the feelings of one I thought below me; of one, I blush to say it, that I knew was obliged to me; of one whom presumption and folly, perhaps, made me deem not my superior *then* in parts, though I have since felt my infinite inferiority to him."

The coldness between the two friends lasted for three years, after which they were reconciled and were on terms of the closest intimacy for the rest of Gray's life.

Two months after Gray returned from abroad his father died, leaving Mrs. Gray miserably provided for. She joined her scanty resources to those of a widowed sister, and with her went to live at Stoke Pogis, near Burnham. After this Gray spent some part of every year at Stoke Pogis, which has ever since been indissolubly connected with his name.

At his father's death he turned his thoughts to the Law, the profession towards which he had originally imagined his studies to be directed, although he had not the slightest inclination in its favour. He spent the winter of 1741-42 in London, to a great extent in the company of his friend West, whom he had found in great distress both of mind and body. Gray's legal studies did not amount to much, but in the production of verse this winter and the year that followed are conspicuous as his most prolific period. The *Ode to Spring*, the *Ode to Adversity*, and the *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College* belong to 1742, and the famous *Elegy* was probably begun about the same time. It became more and more evident that he was fitted for the life of a cultured *dilettante* and not that of a pushing lawyer ; and he made up his mind, in spite of reminiscences of the dreariness of Cambridge, to return to the university and exist there with his books and his tastes. A degree of B.C.L., which he took in 1743, gave him the rights of unlimited residence, and from that time till his death he made Cambridge his home. Visits to Stoke Pogis and to London made almost the only variety in his existence.

He resided at Peterhouse ; and, though the company there was little to his taste, his constitutional inertness prevented his transferring himself to the neighbouring college of Pembroke, where he would have been much

more at home, till twelve or thirteen years later. The undergraduate of his day was mainly boisterous and coarse, and the graduate dull and pedantic; but Gray was now fortified against external drawbacks by resources in himself. His poetry was, all his life, only an occasional exercise of a faculty he seems to have shrunk from using. At Peterhouse he settled to the study of Greek literature, which attracted him greatly; and this he varied with incursions into the theory of music, architecture and natural history. He studied hard; perhaps, as has been suggested, as a kind of narcotic to his constitutional melancholy. His youthfulness seems to have left him, before he was five-and-twenty, at the end of his foreign tour.

He delighted in correspondence with his friends, prominent among whom were Walpole (newly reconciled with him) and Mason, his future biographer, who was a kind of Boswell to him, enduring rebuffs with a pertinacity not unlike that of the famous Scot. Gray's letters are among the pleasantest specimens of an art for which the eighteenth century is remarkable, a little self-conscious at times, perhaps, but always lightened with a sense of humour that touched even upon his own melancholy.

The Eton *Ode* was published, at Walpole's insistence, in 1747. Like Pope's *Essay on Criticism* it is a well-spring of now familiar quotations, of which many who use them would be puzzled to name the origin. For example, it is his Eton boys that "snatch a fearful joy"; and it is of those classic shades that it is said "where ignorance is bliss, 'twere folly to be wise".

Four years later the famous *Elegy Wrote in a Country Churchyard* was published. It had been completed in the previous year (1750) and sent to Walpole, whose

enthusiasm for its beauties led to his sending MS. copies of it broadcast to his friends. The result of this was that a copy fell into the hands of a piratical publisher; and it was only in consequence of his hearing that it was thus in danger of being issued without his authority that Gray was induced to overcome his aversion to publicity and sanction Dodsley's printing it (and then only anonymously) in 1751. It was sold in pamphlet form for sixpence a copy, and became immediately popular. Four editions were called for within a very short time, and in the same year it was printed in three of the most widely read magazines. Gray affected some little disdain for this popular enthusiasm, maintaining that it was only its subject, and not its literary merits, that constituted its appeal to the crowd. This may have been to a certain extent true; but the harmony of its rhythm was welcome to ears tired of the monotony of the rhymed couplet of the Dryden and Pope school of poetry; and the public, unconscious perhaps of the reason why it did so, welcomed the new lyrical spirit which so strongly marked all Gray's verse. Its higher qualities —its sensibility and the dignity of its language—were at once recognised by men of letters, and have been so ever since. It was characteristic of Gray's peculiar reverence for his art that he refused in this case, as in every other, to take payment for his poems, leaving the material reward (which was considerable) to his printers.

His poetic work during the next four or five years is almost entirely represented by two odes, *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard*, though two hitherto unpublished pieces appeared in the collection issued in 1753, as *Six Poems*, with designs by Richard Bentley,

son of the famous Master of Trinity. His slow rate of work is a constant topic of humorous reference in his letters. *The Bard* he nicknamed "The Odikle," because of the tiny proportions it attained in spite of all the efforts of his friends to urge him to finish it. "Odikle is not a bit grown, though it is fine mild open weather," he wrote in December 1756.

His mother's death, early in the year 1753, was not unexpected, for she had been long ill; but the shock of the separation told severely on Gray. His visits to her at Stoke Pogis had always been happy. It was characteristic of him that he had never allowed either his mother or her sister to know of his being a poet. When he was at Stoke during his mother's last illness, the proof of one of Bentley's designs for the *Elegy* was sent to him. Seeing upon it a representation of a village funeral, the old ladies took it to be a memorial card of some dead friend, and asked Gray if he had been left a ring.

His health, which was never good, gave way in 1755 in a serious illness. This left him depressed and shaken, and an easy prey to melancholy apprehensions of every kind. He was in extreme terror of the idea of fire; and so nervous of the risks he imagined that he ran at Cambridge through the carelessness of riotous undergraduates, that he had a rope ladder attached to an iron bar in his window at Peterhouse to provide him, if necessary, with a means of escape. This was made the instrument of a cruel practical joke, which fortunately did not have as serious consequences as it well might. No doubt the ladder hanging from the windows of this prim graduate was a temptation to the boisterous "young bloods" of the college; but respect for Gray's position should have prevented their putting

a tub of water beneath the ladder one dark night, and then raising a lively alarm of fire. The window was thrown open, and the unlucky little poet, clad only in his nightgown, climbed hurriedly down the ladder, only to find himself in the cold water.

Incensed at the supineness of the authorities at Peterhouse in taking any adequate notice of the outrage, Gray took his name off the books of the college and transferred himself to Pembroke, where he was welcomed with open arms.

For the rest of his life his home was in his rooms at Pembroke, which he arranged and kept with a daintiness most unusual in those days. The fifteen years he spent there were uneventful. He gave himself up entirely to congenial study, and wrote almost no more poetry. "Removing myself from Peterhouse to Pembroke," he wrote to a friend in 1756, "may be looked upon as a sort of era in a life so barren of events as mine."

When Colley Cibber died, in 1757, and the Laureateship thus became vacant, the Lord Chamberlain offered the post to Gray. It was manifestly impossible for a poet who wrote only "because he must" to undertake the laureate's duties of writing to order and providing odes on set occasions; and, even though the Lord Chamberlain offered to waive that part of the duties of the post in the poet's favour, Gray refused the honour for more personal reasons. To hold such a post as a sinecure would, as he told the friend through whom the offer had been transmitted, make him feel perpetually awkward; and, moreover, "the office has always humbled the professor hitherto, if he were a poor writer by making him more conspicuous, and if he were a good one by setting him at war with the

little fry of his own profession, for there are poets little enough to envy even a poet laureate'

His reputation as the first poet of his day was now decisively established, and his infrequent publications eagerly looked for. In one year (1768) collected editions of his poems were issued by two publishers independently, one in London and one in Glasgow. Gray wrote with somewhat rueful amusement to his friends at the small bulk that his verse made. "But a shrimp of an author," he called himself. His only publication subsequent to this was an *Installation Ode*, which was set to music and performed at the installation of the Duke of Grafton as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge in 1769.

From the beginning of 1759 to the summer of 1761 Gray had been in London, engaged mainly in studying at the newly opened British Museum. He had planned a history of English poetry, and for some time worked enthusiastically at it. Eventually, however, he put all the material he had collected into the hands of his friend Wharton. Gray's letters from London give a ludicrous account of the internecine feuds that raged at the British Museum in the first years of its life. The principal librarian and his subordinates were at perpetual warfare, and this, added to the extravagance of the trustees, led Gray to prophesy a speedy closing of the institution and a sale of all its contents.

Another youthful institution in which Gray interested himself, even to the extent of personal patronage, was the Society of Arts, which held its first exhibition at the Adelphi in 1760. Out of this beginning the Royal Academy was gradually evolved.

Three years before he died Gray was appointed Professor of History and Modern Languages at Cam-

bridge. The professorship was practically a sinecure, for none of his predecessors in it had ever delivered any lectures, and it was not to be expected that he should do so. He was obliged, however, out of the professorial salary to provide teachers in French and Italian. His means, even for one who lived as simply as he did, had always been small, though he had probably never known actual distress; and this substantial addition to them made a material difference to the comfort of the last years of his life.

Quiet study, varied only by the visits of his friends, and one or two excursions in different parts of the kingdom, filled his days. His health grew worse and worse. Perpetual neuralgia and an obstinate lung trouble wore out his constitution, till, as he said, he "trembled at an east wind". The end came rather suddenly. He was taken ill at dinner in the College Hall at Pembroke on 24th July, 1771, and a week later lay dead in his rooms. He was buried at Stoke Pogis, beside his mother.

Gray was all his life fortunate in his friends; indeed it is impossible to conceive of his making enemies. Though he let the world see but little of his inmost self, none but those entirely lacking in refinement of mind could fail to be charmed by the personality of the shy little poet. He was something of an epicure in the best sense, in the daintiness in which he chose to live, in his care of his dress, in his veneration for everything that was beautiful, and in the pleasure he derived from cultivating an unusually alert mind. "The mind has more room in it than most people seem to think, if you will but furnish the apartments," he says in one of his letters.

Probably even his intimate friends—Walpole, West,

Mason, Wharton, or Bonstetten, a young Swiss whose absolute healthfulness, coupled with a genuine adoration of Gray, won the latter's heart—knew more of the real Gray through his letters than any other way. The sensitiveness that would often in company cause him to shrink within a shell of silence is abandoned when he writes to those who, he is certain, will take his meaning unerringly. Whether telling a scholarly friend of his recent explorations in Greek literature, or sympathising with exquisite tact in another's bereavement, or sending to another a delicately sketched picture of his daily occupations and their result, whatever the occasion and whatever their mood, his letters to his friends are the frankest witnesses to the beauty and goodness of his disposition. His beliefs were simple, and his guiding rule of life an avoidance of unkindness in any shape, not only, as he somewhere says, of unkindness in action, but of that much greater unkindness, in speech.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY.

It is agreed between Oliver Goldsmith M. B on one hand and James Dodsley on the other that Oliver Goldsmith shall write for James Dodsley a book called a Chronological history of the lives of eminent persons of Great Britain and Ireland or to that effect, consisting of about two volumes 8vo about the same size and letter with the universal history published in 8vo for the writing of which and compiling the same James Dodsley shall pay Oliver Goldsmith three guineas for every printed sheet. so that the whole shall be delivered complete in the space of two years at farthest James Dodsley however shall print the above book in whatever manner or size he shall think fit only the universal history above mentioned shall be the standard by which Oliver Goldsmith shall expect to be paid [illegible] shall be paid one moiety upon delivery of the whole copy complete, and the other moiety one half of it at the conclusion of six months and the other half at the expiration of twelve months next after the publication of the work, giving James Dodsley giving however upon the delivery of the whole copy two notes for the money left unpaid. Each volume of the above intended work shall not contain more than five and thirty sheets and if they should contain more the surplus shall not be paid for by James Dodsley. [illegible] Oliver Goldsmith shall print his name to the said work.

Oliver Goldsmith.

Mar. 31. 1763

Jas Dodsley

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

Facsimile (slightly reduced) of an Agreement (in Goldsmith's handwriting) between Goldsmith and his publisher, James Dodsley, respecting a *Chronological History of the Lives of Eminent Persons* (which was never written). (Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 19,022, f. 8.)

[*Face page* 108.

IX.

GOLDSMITH.

IT has been given to few writers, among those whom posterity has accounted great, to excel in so many directions as did Goldsmith. To have written, as he did, a piece of fiction whose name is as much a household word as *Robinson Crusoe*, a volume of essays as entertaining as any of their kind, two poems that have become part of our familiar literature, and a comedy that has never grown old, is to have well merited so kindly a eulogy as Johnson's, that "Goldsmith was a man who, whatever he wrote, did it better than any other man could do".

This success was the more remarkable because, so far from Goldsmith having chosen literature as a career or consciously trained himself for it, he only fell back upon it as a last resource when various means of livelihood, which he had attempted, failed him. At the same time the roving life he led in his early years gave him an experience of men and things that was afterwards invaluable. To have seen all sorts and conditions of men, to have been obliged to live by his wits, to have known life stripped of its pretences—this was an involuntary training to which he owed some thanks when he began to write, for he could write of things he knew.

When Oliver Goldsmith was born, on 10th November, 1728, in a ramshackle old farmhouse in an out-of-the-way village in County Longford, his father was a poor curate there, eking out his scanty stipend by farming. Fortunately preferment came two years later; but even then the elder Goldsmith was none too easily able to provide for his family of five. He was recklessly generous and hospitable, and brought his children up in the same principles. As his son afterwards wrote of him in a passage that unmistakeably refers to his own childhood, his father's "education was above his fortune, and his generosity greater than his education," with the result to his children that he "perfectly instructed them in the art of giving away thousands before they were taught the more necessary qualifications of getting a farthing".

Oliver was not a particularly bright boy, and "book-learning" was not so much to his taste as listening to the songs of a blind harper, or to the exciting reminiscences of the village schoolmaster, who was an old soldier primed with fairy lore as well as the memories of exciting deeds. This gave the boy a taste for romances, which were the only books that attracted him. His taste for music showed itself early, and a certain skill on the flute afterwards proved of the greatest service to him. An attack of small-pox, when he was a child, nearly killed him, and left his face much pitted and disfigured. In spite of his athletic prowess, which was considerable, he probably was not very happy at school, for he was almost morbidly sensitive, and his schoolfellows' frank comments upon his personal appearance gave him as much pain as the accusations of stupidity that he received at the hands of teachers, who could not see through his shyness.

An episode of his school days has become historical, for in after years it suggested to him one of the most laughable scenes in *She Stoops to Conquer*. He was about fifteen years old when, at the end of the holidays, he was returning to school in state ; for he was riding on a horse a rich friend had lent him, and furthermore had in his pocket a substantial "tip" furnished by his friend's generosity. Being overtaken by nightfall, he asked a gentleman he met on the road to direct him to the best inn in the neighbourhood. He was unlucky enough to have fallen in with one who was something of a wag ; and the latter, amused at the boy's assumption of a grown man's airs, directed him to the house of the local magnate. Arrived there, the young Goldsmith called confidently for the best the house could provide and gave careful instructions for his entertainment, to the great amusement of his host, who, knowing something of Goldsmith's father, and fortunately appreciating the joke, allowed the boy to treat the house as an inn and himself as the landlord, and to depart next day without being undeceived.

Despite the smallness of his means, his father determined that Oliver should, like his elder brother, go to Trinity College, Dublin ; and for that purpose had saved what was, to him, a considerable sum. Unluckily, one of the boy's sisters at this juncture married into a wealthy family ; and the pride of the old clergyman made him insist on giving his daughter a dowry, which swallowed up all that had been set aside to pay for Oliver's college career. Thus it became necessary to face the fact that he must go to Trinity College as a "sizar," or not at all. We may well believe that, in spite of the humiliations and hardships that a sizar's lot entailed, Goldsmith never for a moment resented

the use to which the money was put, for the spirit that animated his father was exactly what he himself afterwards displayed in more than one instance.

It cannot be denied, however, that the prospect of a college career as sizar was formidable. These lowly collegians were allowed educational privileges in return for their performing many menial offices for their more fortunate companions. They wore a distinctive dress, were lodged in the garrets of the colleges, were obliged to sweep and scour, and to wait upon the fellows' table in the dining hall. It was little wonder that Goldsmith's sensitiveness made him shrink from this; but he was persuaded by his family, and, rather than embarrass his father, took up the unenviable position.

His college career could scarcely, under the circumstances, be happy; neither, unfortunately, was it particularly creditable to him. He was unlucky in his tutor, who was a bully, and he had no taste for the college curriculum of logic and mathematics. His sense of the slights put upon him ended in open defiance; and most of his time was spent, when he was not more violently occupied, in "loafing about the college gate," or in singing and playing the flute to amuse his companions. He became prominent in every riotous scene that occurred, and was frequently in disgrace. On one occasion he ran away, intending to emigrate to America; but he spent all he had without getting farther than Dublin, and ultimately found his way home almost in a starving condition. By some means the college authorities were induced to let him return, and in February 1749 he was able to leave with a degree. In after years he wrote to his brother urging him not to send his son to college as a poor scholar, if the boy by any chance had "ambition, strong

passions, and an exquisite sensibility of contempt" The advice was prompted by his own experience.

Before Goldsmith left college his father died. The old home was broken up, and Mrs. Goldsmith could not afford to provide for her scapegrace son. For a time he seems to have lived rather like his own Tony Lumpkin—hunting, fishing, drinking with boon companions at the village inn. He had the advantage over Tony, however, in the fact that his kind heart and his generosity, which marked him all his life, won him friends who would otherwise have looked askance at him. He had developed, too, into something more than a respectable musician ; his skill on the flute was considerable. It was with some difficulty that he was made to realise that he must choose a career, and with still greater difficulty that he was induced to think of the Church, the vocation which all his family wished him to adopt. He dutifully attempted to take Orders, but was summarily rejected by the bishop, owing, as he himself afterwards maintained, to his having presented himself at the episcopal palace in plum-coloured breeches, or, as others said, in consequence of the bishop's having heard something of the applicant's college career.

A good-natured uncle next endeavoured to help him by procuring him a post as tutor, but in a very short time Goldsmith was home again. Then his uncle offered to send him to London to study the Law. Goldsmith started off full of good resolutions, but gambled away all his money in Dublin, and again had to return home. It is not surprising that his relations with his mother and brothers now became somewhat strained, and for a time the patient uncle was obliged to give him a domicile. Eventually, some one suggested

that he should try Medicine as a profession, and he was equipped with means to go to Edinburgh and study there. By good fortune, this time he reached his destination.

In Edinburgh he seems to have enjoyed himself a good deal and learnt very little. His social qualities made him a number of friends, and he never seems to have been at a loss for amusement. But before long he became restless, and determined on going abroad, nominally to pursue his studies. Having just escaped arrest for debt, he made his way to Leyden, where he apparently made a rather better use of his time. He was able to pay for his classes with sums gained by teaching English; but here again the gaming table, which all his life was a snare to him, frequently proved his undoing. He was interested and delighted by the novelty of his surroundings, which whetted his desire to see more of other countries. He possessed the faculty of observation, indispensable to an author, and the scenes he witnessed were stored up in his mind, accumulating into a rich mass of material upon which he drew freely in after years. He determined to leave Leyden and, by hook or crook, to travel in other parts of the continent. It was characteristic of him that when, just before leaving Leyden, he saw in a florist's shop some rare bulbs of a variety he knew his uncle to covet, he at once expended all his money in buying them and packing them off to his benefactor; and so, as he said, he left Leyden "with only one clean shirt and no money in his pocket".

For a year he wandered, probably mostly on foot, through Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. In some way he managed to pick up a living as he went along, often, apparently, trusting to his

flute-playing to earn him shelter for the night. A speech which he afterwards put into the mouth of George Primrose in *The Vicar of Wakefield* was no doubt a reminiscence of these experiences. "I had some knowledge of music, with a tolerable voice, and now turned what was once my amusement into a present means of bare subsistence. . . . Whenever I approached a peasant's house towards nightfall, I played one of my most merry tunes, and that procured me not only a lodging but subsistence for the next day." And an article written on him in the *European Magazine* some twenty years after his death speaks of him at this time as "living on the hospitalities of the friars in convents, sleeping in barns, and picking up a kind of mendicant livelihood by the German flute". The writer speaks of these experiences of Goldsmith's as "his distresses on the continent," but there is little to make us think that he was not quite happy in this hand-to-mouth existence. He is said by some means to have contrived to obtain a medical degree (which he certainly afterwards adopted) in the course of his wanderings, perhaps at Louvain. He made his way back to England in February, 1756, now twenty-eight years of age, equipped with this doubtful degree and a large experience of men and manners.

He found himself in London, as he wrote to his brother, "without friends, recommendations, money or impudence". A miserable pittance gained by doing errands for an apothecary scarcely kept the life in him, and he was in severe straits when he managed to find out an old college friend who was established in the town as a doctor. By his help he set up as physician in a very small way in Southwark. His patients were of the poorest class, and his "practice"

scarcely remunerative, but it indirectly became the means of his first introduction to the profession of letters. A printer, to whom Goldsmith had shown some kindness, introduced him to Samuel Richardson, who gave him employment as proof-corrector. This set fire to a new train of aspiration in Goldsmith, who promptly wrote a tragedy, which, however, was "born to blush unseen". He was full of schemes for bettering his position, amongst them one of going to the east to decipher inscriptions in Arabic, a language of which he knew nothing, but thought he could "pick up enough on the way!"

At last he fell in with an Edinburgh class-mate who had set up a school for boys at Peckham. At his invitation Goldsmith went to the Peckham school and remained there for some little time as usher. He probably was not nearly as unhappy there as he made out, for both the pedagogue and his wife seem to have been good friends to him; but his sensitiveness exaggerated the indignity of his position and the slights the boys put upon him. He was still like a child in money matters, and could not even keep the few shillings he earned. So helpless did he appear in this respect that the schoolmaster's wife offered to keep his money for him, as she did for the "young gentlemen". "Indeed, ma'am, there is as much necessity," said Goldsmith.

He had reason to be grateful to the chance that took him to the school, for it was through it that he was able to take the first step on his literary career. A prominent bookseller and publisher, Griffiths by name, was a friend of his employer's and often at the house at Peckham. He was shrewd enough to see that Goldsmith's abilities were worth his attention,

and that his varied experience would give his criticism some value ; and so before long the usher was transformed into a sort of sub-editor of the *Monthly Review*, a magazine belonging to Griffiths. The new state of things did not last very long, for before a year was over Goldsmith had quarrelled with Griffiths. The former's absolutely unbusinesslike habits were probably the cause of their difference ; but with Griffiths Goldsmith had at any rate gained practice in writing and in arranging his thoughts. He had contributed to the *Review* criticisms of so varied an assortment of writers as Smollett, Burke, Wilkes, Johnson and Gray, and had probably discovered within himself promptings to a literary life, or, at the least, the possibility of making a living by his pen. He conceived the scheme of a book which should be an "essay upon the present state of taste and literature in Europe," and wrote to his friends and relations soliciting subscriptions towards it.

Meanwhile schemes would not feed him, and he was obliged to seek refuge again with his friends at Peckham, while he endeavoured with their help to obtain a humble medical appointment in the service of the East India Company. The appointment was provisionally granted, but on presenting himself at Surgeons' Hall for examination he was rejected as "not qualified".

There was nothing for it now but literary hack-work, and by that he managed to maintain himself in a garret in London until, in the spring of 1759, his long projected book was published under the ambitious title of *An Enquiry into the Present State of Public Learning in Europe*. Although, after the fashion of the day, it was published anonymously, the freshness of its style,

and the writer's evident grasp of certain bearings of his subject, attracted sufficient attention to arouse curiosity as to its author. Before the close of the year Goldsmith was gratified to find that his success with this first piece of original work brought him other commissions, and obtained an entrance into various periodicals for the contributions he offered them. From that moment, as a writer, he never looked back; and, though he suffered vicissitudes of personal fortune, his literary reputation steadily grew. At the beginning of the year he had written to a friend that he had "thought himself into a settled melancholy and an utter disgust of all that life brings with it"; but this was now lightened by the prospect of success. To the same friend he described himself as a person of "pale melancholy visage, with two great wrinkles between the eyebrows, an eye disgustingly severe, and a big wig".

Henceforward Goldsmith's life is that of a hard-working writer, a dweller in the Bohemia of his day, erratic in his habits and careless of the money he made, like a child in his harmless vanity and easily wounded self-esteem, generous to a fault, and beloved by every one who came into contact with him. Johnson sought him out a year or so after the appearance of the *Enquiry*, and was for the rest of Goldsmith's life his staunchest friend. Johnson's own sensitiveness, which he so successfully masked, recognised that of his less robust friend, and led him to champion him vigorously and tenderly defend him from the taunts of the unthinking. There was no one in whose society Johnson took more pleasure, while Goldsmith, on his part, would submit to admonition and advice from Johnson as he would from no one else. He was in-

cluded among the members of the famous Literary Club, where his intimacy with Johnson was a thorn in the side of Boswell, who did not make the great man's acquaintance till two years later than Goldsmith. Many of the club were disposed to look upon Goldsmith as merely a clever hack writer, though an excellent boon companion, until Johnson altered their attitude by maintaining him to be "one of the first men we now have as an author".

In 1762 Goldsmith published *The Citizen of the World*, which had been appearing serially in the *Public Ledger* in the form of letters written to one of his countrymen by a Chinese visitor to England. These letters contain comment of an enjoyable freshness and variety upon topics of all descriptions. Goldsmith's years of changing adventures had stored his mind with impressions, which he could now present vividly, at the same time indulging in much good-natured satire at the expense of the follies and absurdities of the moment. He was unceasingly industrious; and for the next ten years, besides getting through a great quantity of "pot-boilers," he almost annually produced at least one work which was of such quality as either to ensure its lasting fame or to make an immediate impression deep enough to advance his reputation. The year 1764 saw the publication of his first poem, *The Traveller*, which at once decided his literary position. The following year he published a volume of *Essays* collected from periodicals; in 1766 *The Vicar of Wakefield* appeared; a little more than a year after that his comedy *The Good Natured Man* was performed at Covent Garden; in 1769 he made a success with a popular *History of Rome;* in 1770 came his second poem, *The Deserted*

Village; and the climax was reached when, in March, 1773, *She Stoops to Conquer* was first played at Covent Garden.

The world has reason to be grateful to Goldsmith's chronic impecuniosity, for the reason that it prevented his adopting an obstinate predilection for any one form of writing. As a matter of fact he wrote what would pay best, and for a public of varied tastes he wrote in varying styles. His two poems were probably his "labour of love," and reflect more of their author's personality than any other of his works; but everything that he produced was marked by scrupulous care, showing that he had the true artist's pleasure in making all his work, whatever its kind, as good as lay in his power. Even his hack-work was unusually conscientious. He had no great store of knowledge beyond what he gained in the school of life, but, as Johnson said, he had "the art of compilation" amongst his other gifts. So great an authority upon history as Macaulay wrote of Goldsmith's epitomes of the histories of Rome and England that "he was a great, perhaps an unequalled, master of the arts of selection and condensation".

His poetry is remarkable for the grace of its descriptive power in an age when poetry, but for Gray, was still formal and artificial. In *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village* there is heart as well as head, which accounts for their enduring popularity; they too, like all his best work, are finished with the utmost care. *The Deserted Village*, a poem of some 350 lines, represents more than a year's careful work in correction and revision. The workmanship of the poems appealed to contemporary critical taste, which was keen in that respect, while their gentle temper and happily-drawn

descriptions provided a new source of pleasure to the general reader.

Just before the publication of *The Vicar of Wakefield* Goldsmith tried to add to his finances by setting up again as a physician. Some of his friends, including Sir Joshua Reynolds, advised the course, and tried to assist him in it; but his medical career was finally brought to an inglorious end by his concocting for a patient a prescription of such a nature that the apothecary flatly refused to dispense the medicine, and the patient to take it if it were dispensed.

The immortal *Vicar* is nowadays perhaps oftener taken for granted as a classic than read, to the loss of those who neglect it. Its vein of sentimentality, suited to the taste of its time, may be tiresome to modern readers; but no one of any literary taste, or appreciation of insight into human nature, can fail to come under the charm of its polished workmanship, its command of character, its quiet humour, and what Goethe described as "its lofty and benevolent irony, its fair and indulgent view of all infirmities and faults". Five editions of the book appeared in Goldsmith's lifetime, and it has been translated into almost every European language, including Finnish.

Goldsmith's first comedy, *The Good Natured Man*, brought him a substantial sum of money, though it did not achieve the popular success it deserved. The taste of the day was largely for tragedy and sentimental drama, and a play which deliberately ridiculed sentimentality came upon the public as a shock. Still, it paved the way for the infinitely superior *She Stoops to Conquer*, and in the meantime it filled Goldsmith's pockets. Unfortunately, with his usual thriftlessness, he squandered the money as soon as it was made. He

took rooms in the Temple that were much too expensive for him; and a series of convivial dinners, card-parties and suppers soon reduced him again to an empty pocket. His hospitality was unbounded and his love of fun indestructible. The combination of the two were almost too much for the learned Blackstone, who, in rooms immediately below Goldsmith's, endeavoured vainly to concentrate his mind upon his legal *Commentaries*.

In consequence of the success of Goldsmith's Roman and English histories, and probably also of Johnson's emphatic approval of them, the King bestowed upon him the post of Professor of Ancient History to the newly formed Royal Academy. No salary went with the post, which, as Goldsmith wrote to his brother, he took rather as a compliment to the institution than any benefit to himself. "Honours to one in my situation," he says, "are something like ruffles to one that wants a shirt." Johnson had at the same time been appointed Professor of Ancient Literature.

Goldsmith now found his friends among the best wits of the day. Burke, Johnson, Garrick and Sir Joshua Reynolds were his intimates, and Goldsmith, whose harmless vanity was as frank as his good nature, was not a little pleased at the importance which attended him. But although he associated daily with the most brilliant minds, he never shone in conversation. Partly from his want of actual learning, and still more from a constitutional shyness which overtook him when he least desired it, his brain did not work rapidly enough for his thoughts to arrange themselves clearly in speech. His writings show the very reverse. Lucidity and order are their characteristics; but this was achieved by patient and careful work. His thoughts then had time

to fall into order and his literary instinct to make a right choice of words. In company he was often indebted to Johnson's kindness of heart for rescuing him from ridicule, and his work owed as much to the great man's encouraging appreciation. It was mainly Johnson's persuasion that induced the manager of Covent Garden to produce *She Stoops to Conquer;* and when the play was published Goldsmith acknowledged his debt by dedicating the play to Johnson with these grateful words: "I do not mean so much to compliment you as myself. It may do me some honour to inform the public that I have lived many years in intimacy with you. It may serve the interests of mankind also to inform them that the greatest wit may be found in a character, without impairing the most unaffected piety."

Contrary to the manager's prognostications, *She Stoops to Conquer* was an immediate triumph, and Goldsmith's friends were as pleased at the decisive rout of the sentimental drama as he was at his own success. It was his last great effort. A year later he became very ill, and aggravated his condition by an obstinate adherence to a quack medicine in which he implicitly believed. He had not the constitution to withstand illness, and after ten days of low fever died on 4th April, 1774. He was buried in the Temple Church; and two years later the affection of his friends of the Literary Club caused a monument to be erected to his memory in Westminster Abbey.

Had there been but a little more strength in his character, it would have suffered no word of detraction at the hands of his biographers. As it is, the severest of them can only say that in the man himself there was more to love than to respect. His vanity

never sought to injure others. If he was improvident, he was at the same time profusely generous. His kindness of heart was unquestioned, and that, at least, demanded respect. Johnson, who wrote in the epitaph on Goldsmith's monument that "there was no form of writing he had not essayed, and nothing he had essayed that he did not adorn," took the wisest and kindliest view of "Poor Noll" when he said of him after his death: "Let not his frailties be remembered; he was a very great man".

Industrious Cruelty. As a Man, he has hardly left him the shadow of one good Quality. Churlish: ness in his private life, and a rancorous Hatred of every thing Royal, in his Politics, are the two Colours with which he has smear'd all the Canvass. If he had any Virtues, they are not to be found in the Doctors Picture of him, and it is well for Milton that some Sourness in his Temper is the only Vice with which his Memory has been charged, it is evident enough that if his Biographer could have discovered more, he would not have spared him. As a Poet, he has treated him with Severity enough, and has plucked one or two of the most beautifull Feathers out of his Muses Wing, & trampled them under his great Foot. He has past Sentence of Condemnation upon Lycidas, & has taken Occasion from that charming Poem, to expose to Ridicule what is indeed ridiculous Enough, the childish prattlement of Pastoral Compositions, as if Lycidas was the Prototype & Pattern of them all. The Liveliness of the Description, the Sweetness of the Numbers, the Classical Spirit of Antiquity that prevails in it, go for Nothing. I am convinced by the way that he has no Ear for Poetical Numbers, or that it was stopp'd by Prejudice against the Harmony of Miltons. Was there ever any thing so delightfull as the Music of the Paradise Lost? it is like that of a fine Organ, has the fullest & deepest Tones of Majesty, with all the Softness & Elegance of the Dorian Flute. Variety without End & never equall'd unless perhaps by Virgil. Yet the Doctor has little or nothing to say upon this copious Theme, but talks something about the unfitness of the English Language for Blank Verse, & how apt it is, in the Mouth of some Readers, to degenerate into Declamation. Oh! I could thresh his old Jacket 'till I made his Pension Jingle in his Pocket.

I could talk a good while longer but I have no room. Our Love attends you both where-e & Mrs Shuttleworth, not forgetting the two Miniature Pictures at your Elbow.

Oct. 31 79

Yours affectionately
W. Cowper.

WILLIAM COWPER.

Facsimile (reduced) of part of a Letter to the Rev. William Unwin, commenting on Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. (Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 24,154, f. 17.) (*Face page* 121.

X.

COWPER.

WHEN he was a little more than thirty—about halfway through his life, that is to say—Cowper wrote of himself, in a letter to his cousin Lady Hesketh: "I am of a very singular temper, and very unlike all the men that I have ever conversed with. Certainly I am not an absolute fool, but I have more weakness than the greatest of all the fools I can recollect at present." The shadow which overwhelmed his life was beginning to fall upon it, and when he wrote this he already felt the contrast between his intellectual power and his mental weakness. A few weeks later he attempted to commit suicide, and was for a year and a half shut up in an asylum.

And yet, though this malady dogged his steps all his days and finally destroyed him, his intellectual power when undisturbed by its influence was of a peaceful and even mildly joyous character. The quiet elegance of *The Task*, the fun of *John Gilpin*, the easy wit of Cowper's letters, are not what one would expect from a diseased brain. Unrestrained vehemence, passionate ardour, or a distorted view of life—none of these, under the circumstances, would have been surprising in his writings, but they bear never a trace of them. It may be that this points to a physical rather than a

mental origin of the disease in his case ; indeed, there is considerable reason to think that this was so, and that under a strict regimen his physical health might have mastered the nervous delicacy. His extreme religious fervour, at times amounting to fanaticism, was a symptom of his condition, not a cause.

Many a boy of extreme sensitiveness (and a young boy can be sensitive to an extent undreamed of by his parents) has, by the help of a healthy, happy life and careful treatment entirely outgrown his weakness, and under more fortunate conditions Cowper might have done the same. Unfortunately for him his mother died when he was six years old, and no one could take her place ; and, to make matters worse for him, he was immediately sent to a boarding-school, where for two years he was unspeakably miserable. He was misunderstood by the masters and bullied by his schoolfellows, and in the most impressionable years of his life his affectionate nature was starved. He was unfeignedly delighted when a weakness of his eyes was the cause of his being taken from school and placed under the care of an oculist, in whose house, merely from the fact of being kindly cared for, the boy regained his self-respect and some robustness of disposition.

In 1741, when he was ten years old, he was sent to Westminster School. He spent eight years there, and was able afterwards to look back on them with some pleasure. At Westminster, as at all public schools for many years, bullying was looked upon almost as part of the educational system ; but Cowper, for all his shyness and his love of study, managed to become a very creditable performer at cricket and football, and thereby made his way in the school world. He suffered

from fits of depression, but these healthier possibilities helped to chase them away.

When it came to the question of the choice of a profession, his father (who, though a clergyman, came of a legal stock) wished him to enter the Law, and Cowper dutifully agreed. It may be not altogether fanciful to see in two marked characteristics that afterwards declared themselves in Cowper—his poetic instinct and his strong religious tendency—an inheritance from his reverend father on the one hand, and on the other from his mother, who was a descendant of the poet Donne. The religious fervour was still latent in Cowper; but the literary taste was beginning to show itself. At school he had been remarked for his ease in turning Latin verses, and he read a good deal more classical poetry than the school course exacted.

In obedience to his father's wishes he was articled to an attorney, in whose house in London he lived for three years. His uncle, Ashley Cowper, who had two pretty daughters, lived hard by; and more time, on Cowper's own confession, was spent in "giggling and making giggle" with his fair cousins than in learning law. When he had served his articles, he took chambers in the Temple, and ultimately was called to the Bar in 1754. He does not seem to have made any attempt to practise, but lived a *dilettante* life with some few friends of literary tastes, occasionally contributing articles to periodicals and dabbling in poetry.

By this time he had become deeply attached to his cousin, Theodora Cowper, and she to him, but her father would not hear of a marriage between them. He based his decision on the grounds of their being cousins, but it is possible he had an inkling of the delicate state of Cowper's mind. However this may

have been, the disappointment told severely on Cowper. He became morose and despondent, and his melancholy deepened at the death of his father, which took place soon afterwards. The portion he inherited was scanty, and it was with some thankfulness that he heard that a relation of his had nominated him for the post of Clerk of the Journals to the House of Lords.

Unfortunately his despair of mind, after a brief period of recovery, only deepened at the prospect of the qualifying examination he was to undergo for the post. He exaggerated the difficulties that lay before him, and became possessed by the madman's common delusion of deliberate hostility on the part of those who were to appoint him. So hopeless did the disorder of his mind become, that all thoughts of the ordeal had to be given up. His brain gave way completely, and he made a determined attempt to commit suicide. Partly from an instinctive horror of death, and partly by accident, he failed to take his life. He tried to swallow laudanum, to throw himself into the river, to stab himself in his bed ; but in each case at the critical moment irresolution or circumstance stayed his hand. He tried to hang himself, and nearly succeeded, but fortunately the strap by which he had suspended himself broke, and he was rescued in the nick of time. On recovering consciousness he was seized with horror at the sinfulness of the deed, and conversation with a gloomy Evangelical divine only made matters worse. His madness took a religious turn, and it became obvious that confinement was inevitable. He was sent to a private asylum at St. Albans, where he remained for a year and a half.

His case was kindly and judiciously handled at the

asylum ; and when he was at last discharged as cured, his religious despondency had given way to hope and a fervent happiness of belief. His brother settled him at Huntingdon, within a ride of where he himself lived ; and there for some months Cowper asked for nothing more than his great content in his recovered health, his new spiritual enthusiasm, his books, and such companionship as the sleepy little town afforded. "I am on very good terms with no less than five families, besides two or three odd scrambling fellows like myself," he wrote to Lady Hesketh. Huntingdon was, however, an exceedingly dull place, and a solitary existence there was scarcely the life for one of Cowper's temperament. This he began to realise when the flush of his new excitement died down ; and he was in danger of relapsing into his former despondency when he made an acquaintance which he always looked upon, with good reason, as providential.

It was towards the end of the year 1765 that he became intimate with the family of the Rev. William Unwin, an Evangelical clergyman who had settled in Huntingdon ; "the most comfortable, social folks you ever knew," Cowper described them. Mr. Unwin's religious views strongly interested Cowper, who was a convert to the Evangelicalism that was protesting against the irreligion of the day ; and the unaffected piety and quiet cheerfulness of the Unwin household seemed to him to reflect exactly what his soul desired. Mrs. Unwin, a good woman with a wonderful fund of sympathy, attracted him from the first. He had known her for a very little while when he wrote of her to his cousin : "That woman is a blessing to me, and I never see her without being the better of her company". The bond that was thus formed between them lasted all his

life. They were like brother and sister; she, perhaps, more like a mother to him, so much did he come to depend upon her care and respect her judgment.

To his great delight, the Unwins invited Cowper to become a boarder in their household. No happier arrangement could have been made. "Now I know them," he says in one of his letters, "I wonder that I liked Huntingdon so well before I knew them, and am apt to think I should find every place disagreeable that had not an Unwin belonging to it." In another letter he has left a description of the manner in which his day was passed. Religious exercises filled a great part of it; and it is no little tribute to the sincerity as well as to the tact of the Unwins that Cowper was able to write that "such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness". After religious reading in the morning came daily divine service at eleven; after that, walking, riding or working in the garden till three. After dinner "religious conversation" till tea-time, then "a walk in good earnest," usually with Mrs. Unwin, who was a good walker. At night, reading and converse, as before, till supper, finishing with hymns and a sermon and the summoning of the family to prayers.

This condition of quiet happiness was sadly interrupted by the death of Mr. Unwin, who was thrown from his horse and killed. The house in Huntingdon was given up; and Mrs. Unwin and her son, with Cowper, set about the choice of a new home. Shortly after Mr. Unwin's death, Huntingdon had been visited by the Rev. John Newton, a vigorous, even violent exponent of Methodism. Newton, who was a man of powerful personality, gained a speedy hold upon both Mrs. Unwin and Cowper, and induced them to

settle in a house next to his own at Olney, an uninteresting and squalid town in Buckinghamshire.

In every way this was disastrous to Cowper. The religious side of his life was so real to him, and led to such painful introspection, that his mind's health needed all the relaxation he could extract from innocent pleasures and cheerful conversation. This was now rigorously denied him. There was no relief all day long from the religious exercises prescribed by Newton. Cowper had no time for his beloved books, indeed, he had sold his library ; he saw no friends but Mrs. Unwin, and she was in equal subjection to Newton ; and the only outlet allowed to his poetical tastes was the writing of hymns. It was little wonder that such an existence brought about a return of his madness, which this time was aggravated by terror of the wrath of heaven at his imagined sinfulness, a dread for which the Newton discipline was largely responsible. For more than a year Newton and Mrs. Unwin endeavoured to tend him unaided, refusing, from a perverted conscientiousness, to regard his madness as anything but a visitation of the devil. At last, fortunately for Cowper, they were induced to apply to the doctor who had had charge of him during his first attack, and his wise treatment again resulted in apparently complete success. It was now evident that the disease was constitutional, and therefore likely to recur ; but, happily for Cowper, when the attacks passed off they seemed to do so completely, leaving his gently happy disposition untroubled, save when his religious fears forced his thoughts into that unfortunate channel.

A merciful chance took Newton away from Olney before Cowper's recovery. Freed from his well-meant, but baneful, influence, Cowper and Mrs. Unwin were

once more free to plan their life in a less severe fashion. Mrs. Unwin, taught by the terrible experience she had borne so bravely, saw that congenial occupation for Cowper's thoughts was imperative if he were to remain sane. Accordingly she encouraged him in gardening, carpentering, and the keeping of pets ; his tame hares have become famous in literary history. Realising that this was not enough for a man of his mental capacity, she urged him to develop his undoubted talent for writing verse ; and thus it was that Cowper, now a man of forty-three, received his first impulse towards the achievements which have made him famous. During the next few years he wrote a number of short pieces which formed his first volume of *Poems*, published in 1782. They met with no very encouraging reception ; indeed this was hardly to be expected, owing to the extent to which serious purpose was allowed in them to outweigh poetic fancy. Though Newton was removed from Olney they were written under his stern eye, and published with an extremely depressing preface written by him.

A more fortunate stimulus to Cowper's muse was happily sent to him in the person of Lady Austen, the sister-in-law of a clergyman in the neighbourhood of Olney, who made the acquaintance of the poet and Mrs. Unwin in 1781. Lady Austen, a woman of lively spirits and some wit, took a curious liking for the shy poet, and her settling at Olney was a momentous event in his life. "From a scene of the most uninterrupted retirement we have passed," he wrote, "into a state of constant engagement. Not that our society is much multiplied, the addition of an individual has made all this difference." How thoroughly her good spirits could dissipate the characteristic Olney gloom is shown

by the fact that her recital to him, one night, of the story of John Gilpin not only moved him to peals of laughter, but so possessed him that the next day he produced the famous ballad. *John Gilpin* is pleasant evidence of the rich vein of fun that was characteristic of Cowper in his happiest moments. His letters, which are the most delightful in the language, are full of humour. An instance of this, under the most unpromising circumstances, is the rhyming letter he sent to the solemn Newton, accompanyng the MS. of the *Poems* already alluded to. "My very dear friend," it runs, "my very dear friend, I am going to send, what when you have read, you may scratch your head, and say, I suppose, there's nobody knows, whether what I have got, be verse or not. By the tune and the time, it ought to be rhyme; but if it be, did you ever see, of late or of yore, such a ditty before." The end of the letter, which is all in the same disguised doggerel, runs: "And now I have writ, in a rhyming fit, what will make you dance, and as you advance, will keep you still, though against your will, dancing away, alert and gay, till you come to an end of what I have penned; which that you may do, ere Madam and you are quite worn out with jigging about, I take my leave, and here you receive a bow profound, down to the ground, from your humble me, W. C."

It was to a suggestion of Lady Austen's that the writing of *The Task*, Cowper's *magnum opus*, was due. It was printed in 1785, attracted universal attention, and immediately made its author famous. The grace of its poetry (which resembles Gray in its love of nature and Wordsworth in its transmuting of the commonplace into the beautiful) appealed to judges of literature, and its unstrained piety to the hearts of thousands who found

no pleasure in the shallow satire or artificial sentimentality that marked most of the poetry of Cowper's day. One of his critics has described the spirit of *The Task* as "an innocent epicurism, tempered by religious asceticism," which agrees with Cowper's own declaration that the whole poem had "one tendency, to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue".

Unfortunately the writing of the poem, due to her initiative, was the cause of a rupture between Lady Austen and Cowper, and before it was published she had disappeared from the Olney circle. Proud of the poetry which she regarded as the child of her own encouragement, she seems to have made embarrassing claims, which daily increased, upon the poet's time. He had been in the habit of spending much of the day in her company; but when he needed more time for his work and could not get it, he apparently was unable to conceal his impatience, and the rupture occurred. In an account of the affair which he wrote to Lady Hesketh he says: "Long usage had made that, which was at first optional, a point of good manners, and consequently of necessity; and I was forced to neglect *The Task* to attend upon the muse who had inspired the subject".

Happily for Cowper, Lady Hesketh (elder sister to Theodora Cowper, the poet's early love) came to Olney at this juncture; Cowper's literary activity had convinced her that he had emerged from the Newton influence, and she gladly renewed their former close friendship. Her cheerful nature and sound common sense seem to have been as acceptable to Mrs. Unwin as to Cowper; and she did the pair a considerable

service by inducing them to leave Olney and remove to Weston Underwood, a village not far away, but infinitely pleasanter in situation.

The next few years were the happiest of Cowper's life. Lady Hesketh's influence was a perpetual encouragement, and in many material ways she made life a much brighter thing for both him and Mrs. Unwin. He was busy with his pen, and produced a number of short poems, some of which—for instance, *The Loss of the Royal George*, *The Solitude of Alexander Selkirk*, and *To Mary*—have rivalled *The Task* in popularity. He also embarked upon a translation of Homer. In spite of his happiness in these occupations, his dreaded malady appeared again, and in 1787 he had another attack of insanity and tried to kill himself. The attack passed off, but it was evident that it had made greater inroads upon his constitution than before.

His recovery was this time less complete, and he was confronted with circumstances that gave him little chance to fight against his depression. Mrs. Unwin's health had entirely given way, and, so far from being able to rely on the affectionate care with which she had always surrounded him, he was now obliged to tend her. Her mental faculties had given way under a stroke of paralysis, and she became a fretful and exacting invalid, the very reverse of her former self. Cowper's assiduous devotion to her was the worst thing for a man in his condition, and, to complete his unhappiness, Lady Hesketh had been obliged to leave them on account of ill-health.

A good friend appeared upon the scene in the person of the poet Hayley, whose enthusiastic hero-worship had led him to seek Cowper's acquaintance. He managed to induce Cowper to take Mrs. Unwin away

from Weston and its melancholy associations, and found quarters for them on the Norfolk coast. After trying one or two places, they settled at East Dereham in the autumn of 1795. It was a pitiable existence—Mrs. Unwin in a dying condition, and Cowper sunk again into hopeless insanity, tortured by religious terrors and rarely cheered by a gleam of saner feeling. Mrs. Unwin died soon after they went to East Dereham, and for nearly four years more Cowper dragged out his unhappy existence. The kindness of friends endeavoured to mitigate his misery of mind, but with little effect; and his death, on 25th April, 1800, was unaffectedly felt to be a merciful release.

He was buried in Dereham Church, and, as Southey says in his memoir of Cowper, "never was there a burial at which the mourners might with more sincerity of feeling give their hearty thanks to Almighty God, that it had pleased Him to deliver the departed out of the miseries of this sinful world."

Song —

Here's a health to them that's awa.
Here's a health to them that's awa;
And wha winna wish guide luck to our cause,
May never guide luck be their fa'! —
Its guide to be merry & wise;
Its guide to be honest & true,
Its guide to support Caledonia's cause,
And bide by the Buff & the Blue. —

Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to them that's awa,
Here's a health to Charlie, the chief o' the clan,
Altho' that his hand be sma' —
May Liberty meet wi' success!
May Prudence protect her frae evil!
May Tyrants & Tyranny tine in the mist,
And wander their way to the devil! —

Here's a health &c.
Here's a health &c.
Here's a health to Tammie, the Norland laddie,
That lives at the lug o' the law.
Here's freedom to him that wad read,
Here's freedom to him that wad write!

There's

ROBERT BURNS.

Facsimile (slightly reduced) from his MS. of the Song, "Here's a Health to Them that's Awa". (Brit. Mus., Egerton MS. 1,656, f. 27.)

[Face page 133.

XI.

BURNS.

IT is difficult for us to realise the stir that was occasioned in the world of letters at the end of the eighteenth century by the sudden appearance of a modest volume bearing the title *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect, by Robert Burns.* That the Scottish peasantry were, generally speaking, better educated than the corresponding class in England was nearly as true then as it is now ; even taking that fact into consideration, a ploughman poet, endowed with so delicate a sensibility and speaking so obviously from the heart, was a prodigy in an age when neither nature nor human nature had much to do with poetry. Perhaps more remarkable than this, in the case of a Scottish writer, was the intense patriotism, the intimate knowledge and fervent love of his country, that breathed in all Burns' writings ; for in his time literary culture in Scotland (as Carlyle has pointed out) was more tinged by the colour of French thought than by any other. Moreover it was a new thing—it is rare even now—to find in the reserved Scottish character a self-abandonment and outspokenness such as marks Burns' utterances. If ever song came from the heart, his did. His enormously strong natural impulses broke down all barriers of restraint, and his natural genius enabled

him to glorify the homely tongue of his fathers and tune it to every mood.

A happy home life, to which intelligent thought was no stranger, lay at the root of his powers. His parents were fine instances of a fine type of country people ; his father a hard-working upright farmer, quick of temper, but just and affectionate, and genuinely pious ; his mother gentle and helpful, full of sympathy and encouragement. They were settled on a farm in Ayrshire when Robert Burns was born on 25th January, 1759. His father was not yet a farmer on his own account ; he did not reach that dignity till six or seven years later. For the present he was living, as overseer of a small property, in a humble cottage built by his own hands. A description of it given in after years by the poet's brother says that "it consisted of a kitchen in one end, and a room in the other, with a fireplace and chimney, and there was a concealed bed in the kitchen, with a small closet at the end ; and when altogether cast over inside and outside with lime, it had a neat and comfortable appearance". The cottage still stands, on the road between Ayr and the "Brig o' Doon," and has been converted into a Burns Museum.

The future poet was seven when his father became possessed of a farm, and five or six years later he took his full share of the farm work, from ploughboy to chief labourer. Together with his younger brother Gilbert, he was fortunate in the education he had at the village school. The schoolmaster, who has left a record of his reminiscences of the two boys, grounded them well in such elementary knowledge as he could teach them. Gilbert Burns at this time appeared to give the greater promise of the two. He seemed of a more alert disposition than Robert, whose mind ripened

with less outward show. Curiously enough the latter, who was destined to become the prince of Scottish song-writers, seemed to have but little "ear" as a boy, and the attempt to teach him some simple church music with the other lads was a failure. As soon as he was old enough, hard, unceasing toil had to be taken up, for the farm was a poor one and all had to bear their share in fighting against the severest odds. Burns afterwards described his boyhood as "cheerless gloom"; but it was a far less gloomy life for him than for many a lad of his station, thanks to the steadfast love that pervaded his home, springing from two of the best parents that man ever had. His father added to his own tale of work by carrying on his boys' education when the day's labour was over. In his hands it became a pleasure to learn, and he taught his sons not only what they could together find in books, but also a rarer wisdom of thought and conscience that his own reverent mind begot. It is astonishing to note the books that were read in this humble farmer's cottage in their brief snatches of leisure; Shakespeare and Pope, the *Spectator*, Locke's *Essay*, Allan Ramsay's works, and Hervey's *Meditations* were among them, and these were read with intelligence and much thoughtful discussion.

The story goes that such was their zeal that the family were found, by a neighbour who came in upon them at meal time, seated each with a spoon in one hand and a book in the other. Precious above all other books to Robert was a *Select Collection of English Songs*. Of this he said in later years: "This was my *vade mecum*. I pored over them driving my cart, or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noting the true, tender or sublime from affec-

tation and fustian." Traditions and memories were stored in his mind, and the haunting rhythm of the verse stirred unsuspected ambitions in him. The lift, too, that it gave to his thoughts made the familiar objects of his work take a new aspect, and the homeliest natural scenes to seem beautiful. Without doubt it was the gracious influence of his own home that first made these dear to him, and the sentiment ripened into the passionate love of his country that he afterwards displayed.

The spirit of poetry was smouldering in him, and a sudden gust set it ablaze. When he was fifteen he fell boyishly in love with a "bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass" that was his partner in the harvest field. This touch of passion melted his reserve, and it was to this sweet lass that he wrote his first poem. "I was not so presumptuous," he says, "as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who read Greek and Latin; but my girl sung a song which was said to be composed by a country laird's son on one of his father's maids with whom he was in love, and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he; for, excepting that he could shear sheep, and cast peats, his father living in the moorlands, he had no more scholar-craft than myself. Thus with me began love and poetry."

With the approach of manhood Burns found out his helplessness in the face of female charms. The autobiographical passages he has left show that he realised this; but his passions were too strong for his will, and led him into conduct he deplored in calmer moments. "My heart was completely tinder," he says, "and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other." His "goddess" was always one as humble in station as

himself, or humbler. He had a strong jealousy of people richer or of more consequence than himself, a sentiment that sprung from the intense pride of his nature. It was this same pride that led him to reveal himself, and all his weaknesses, so defiantly in his writings.

Till he was four-and-twenty his life continued much the same: labour on the farm (this, however, less arduous as his father's circumstances improved), and a great deal of love-making. The love-making was of a more or less innocuous description till an unfortunate visit to the town of Irvine, where Burns had gone to learn flax-dressing. He had just been disappointed in a love-affair upon which his heart was ardently set, and in a moody and vengeful frame of mind he fell an easy prey to bad associations. His good nature led him into friendships that did him mischief, and he gave rein to his impulses in a way he afterwards had reason to deplore. "I was never a rogue," he wrote a few years after this, "but I have been a fool all my life." The flax-dressing business proved a failure, his partner robbed him, and their shop was burnt down as they were giving "a welcome carousal to the New Year". Thus, says Burns, "I was left, like a true poet, without a sixpence". He returned home to find his father dying.

Before the Irvine episode, the new stir in his emotions had resulted in some songs which he never afterwards surpassed in simple beauty. *My Nannie, O*, and *Mary Morison* may be named as two of the best known. His father, though he had quickly seen and recognised his son's powers, saw also with alarm his weakness of will in the face of strong emotion, and the dangers that lay in wait for one whom nature had made so charming

a boon-companion. On his deathbed he warned him of this, to the poet's uncontrollable grief; but there was comfort, too, for Burns in the knowledge that his father recognised his genius and had been proud of it. "Whoever lives to see it," he had said, "something extraordinary will come from that boy."

When their father was dead, the brothers managed to save enough from the wreck of the family fortunes to take a smaller farm, where they installed their mother and her other children. The three or four years that followed were the most momentous of his life. He made the best resolutions for prudence when he set to work upon the new farm. "I read farming books," he says, "I calculated crops, I attended markets, and, in short, in spite of the devil, the world and the flesh, I should have been a wise man." But unfortunately bad harvests and ill fortune called for a greater strength of resistance than he possessed. His new resolutions fell to the ground, undisciplined thoughts took the place of prudence, and his poetic gifts, now at their fullest, were too often unscrupulously used in ribald satirising of the stricter principles that in his heart he knew to be right. Such poems as *Holy Willie's Prayer*, *The Holy Fair*, or *The Jolly Beggars* were written in a spirit of deliberate defiance; how great were the gifts that he misused in them is fortunately more happily shown by other poems of the same period, in which kindly humour and tenderness abound. Foremost among these is *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, a poem surpassed by none in the language for simple beauty, and remarkable for its loving picture of the cheerful, God-fearing home he had known in his father's lifetime.

Late in 1784 he wrote in his commonplace book

"Obscure I am, obscure I must be, though no young poet nor young soldier's heart ever beat more fondly for fame than mine". Fame was nearer him than he dreamed, but before he reached it he had to pass through two momentous years. Jean Armour, the daughter of a neighbouring master-mason, had fallen in love with him and, in spite of all remonstrances, gave herself body and soul to this passionate lover. After some months of stolen happiness Burns contracted a secret marriage with her, in evidence of which she had the written acknowledgment that, in Scotch law, made the marriage valid. Her father's anger, when he discovered this, knew no bounds. Jean was forced to destroy the precious paper and forbidden to see her lover again, while the terrors of the law were threatened against the unhappy poet. Burns, in despair, resolved to emigrate to the West Indies, but want of money to pay for his passage kept him a miserable prisoner at home. Smarting under the pain of Jean's abandonment of him, his inflammable heart sought consolation in another quarter; and the pure and sincere affection of the unhappy "Highland Mary," whose love for a short time held his wayward heart captive, has become historic. Burns at least believed his love for her to be sincere, and he vowed that it should be honourable, while she was ready to give up everything in order to throw in her lot with his. Fate was against them, however; and the episode, which is like a bright gleam through the troubled dark of Burns' life at this time, ended in the devoted girl's death a few months later.

Burns was now more than ever determined to go to the Indies, but the passage-money seemed an insurmountable obstacle. A friend of his suggested that

he should raise the necessary sum by publishing by subscription the poems he had written, which now amounted to a goodly number. This was done, and in June 1786 the *Poems* appeared. Within two months every copy was sold, and Burns was £20 the richer. The passage for the West Indies was bought, but fortunately was never used. The *Poems* made an instantaneous appeal to high and low alike, and their author suddenly found himself famous and his society courted. His friends interested themselves to try and get him some post at home, and all thought of the West Indies was given up. This transformation came about at a time when Burns was, he tells us, "wandering from one friend's house to another" to avoid the prospect of arrest in consequence of the proceedings Jean Armour's father had set on foot.

A contemporary's account of the reception of the *Poems* tells us that "old and young, high and low, grave and gay, learned or ignorant, were alike delighted, agitated, transported. . . . Even ploughboys and maid-servants would have gladly bestowed the wages they earned most hardly, and which they wanted to purchase necessary clothing, if they might procure the works of Burns." The humour, the manliness, the love of country, the extreme sensibility to beauty and the tender sense of pity that pervade the best of the poems proved irresistible, couched as the verses were in the familiar tongue dear to all.

A sort of triumphal progress through the houses of men of all ranks, who were eager to make the acquaintance of this new genius, brought him to Edinburgh, where he was welcomed as warmly in general society as among men of letters. "He was much caressed in Edinburgh," says Sir Walter Scott, "but the efforts

made for his relief were trifling." Burns held his own in these new surroundings with a proud simplicity that was remarkable. Flattery had no power to spoil him, and the realisation that he had reached the position he deserved seems to have given to his character a solidity and steadiness which it had lacked. Except for some characteristic lapses, and these of no great moment, he showed that he had gained control over himself, and self-respect followed upon success. "My beloved household gods," he wrote to a friend, "are independence of spirit and integrity of soul." And again: "I am, I must confess, too frequently the sport of whim, caprice and passion; but reverence to God, and integrity to my fellow-men, I hope I shall ever preserve".

Several personal descriptions of Burns at this time have come down to us. The following may be quoted as characteristic: "His person, though strong and well-knit, and much superior to what might be expected in a ploughman, appeared to be only of the middle size, but was rather above it. His countenance was not of that elegant cast which is most frequent among the upper ranks, but it was manly and intelligent, and marked by a thoughtful gravity which shaded at times into sternness. In his large dark eye the most striking index of his genius resided. It was full of mind. . . . In no part of his manner was there the slightest affectation; nor could a stranger have suspected, from anything in his behaviour or conversation, that he had been for some months the favourite of all the fashionable circles of the metropolis."

Fortunately, after some months of negotiation, Burns was able to make a favourable arrangement for the publication of a second edition of the *Poems*, which

appeared, with the inclusion of several new pieces, in 1787. His profits from the sale of this amounted to over £400. Of this he at once made over more than a third to his brother Gilbert, who was in difficulties. The balance, after a tour in the Border country, and another farther north, he invested in the following year in a farm at Ellisland, near Dumfries.

Before he settled there an event occurred which proved the turning-point of his life. A visit to his mother resulted in his meeting once more with Jean Armour. Her father's servility to him now that he was famous and no longer poor was even more offensive to Burns than Armour's former harshness had been. He speaks of disgust of the "mean, servile compliance" of the Armour family, but Jean was not included in the condemnation. "Old kail is sooner warmed than new kail made," runs the Scottish proverb, and it proved true in this case. The old affection blazed up again, and he and Jean were speedily on the same footing as before, Burns realising that Jean had been faithful to him in thought, and had acted on her father's compulsion when she gave him up.

Burns went back to Edinburgh, and various "goddesses" succeeded one another in their hold upon his unstable heart, till a new turn was given to the course of his life by his receiving the news early in 1788 that his intimacy with poor Jean was about to produce its inevitable result, and that her father had turned her out of his house. Burns at once provided for her and arranged for her finding a temporary home with a friend of his; in the autumn of the same year he formally married her. This he never regretted. He knew that the step he took would separate him irre-

vocably from the world of fashion in which he had been fêted, as well as from the world of letters in which he felt entitled to take his place. But the cooling of enthusiasm in the one case and the little real fellowship he found in the other made him return, with bitterness of soul, perhaps, but with an outward appearance of content, to a farmer's life and the love of his humble wife. Writing to one of his Edinburgh friends, he says: "I have married my Jean. I had a long and much-loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery in my determination, and I durst not trifle with so important a deposit, nor have I any cause to repent it." His wife has, he says, "the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the country".

In the spring of 1789 Burns took his wife to the farm at Ellisland. It lay in a beautiful situation, but was a poor farm—"a poet's, not a farmer's choice," one of his friends told him. While a suitable farmhouse was building he had left his wife with her father, to whom he had become reconciled, and had lived in a tumble-down cottage whose dismal appearance sorely tried his fortitude. However, when the new house was finished and his wife and children settled there with him, Burns made a determined effort towards a regular and peaceful life. He worked hard on his farm, set up a parish library, and was regular in his attendance at church, besides attending carefully to the observance of family worship at the farm. There is no doubt that he had noted the effect of his father's scrupulousness in such matters; and moreover, for all his excesses, Burns was at heart genuinely religious. It was with no hypocrisy that he wrote in his commonplace book: "Religion has ever been to me not only my chief de-

pendence, but my dearest enjoyment. An irreligious poet is a monster.

At the end of 1789 he began to find his means insufficient for his increasing family, and, after much searching of mind, applied for the post of Excise Officer for the district. He was at once appointed. He intensely disliked the work of "searching auld wives barrels," but faced it manfully for the sake of those for whom he had to provide. He was a merciful exciseman, at any rate to the country folk, and many a tale is told of his giving kindly warning of his approach when he meditated a raid upon a cottage where illicit brewing was more than suspected.

Unfortunately it became impossible to look well after his farm under these new circumstances. His exciseman's work took him much away from home, and the farm, never very productive, suffered from his absence. Eventually after two years spent there—two years which were in some ways the happiest of his life—he determined to give up the farm; and in August 1791 he left Ellisland and settled in Dumfries.

Despite his hard work his pen had not been idle at Ellisland. Some of his best known poems date from there, poems of every shade of feeling, ranging from the mad frolic of *Tam o' Shanter* to the lyrical beauty of *The Banks o' Doon* or the pathos of *To Mary in Heaven.*

Were it not for the fact that the wonderful well of song continued almost inexhaustibly till he died, one would willingly forget the last five years of Burns' life. Robbed of the healthy atmosphere of his farm, and compelled to a drudgery he despised, he by degrees lost his grip of life and let his inclinations again and again overcome his better judgment. Besides such

excesses as he had always been prone to, he gave way to mental excesses. He made the "cause of freedom" an excuse for running atilt at authority of every kind, until his incautiously expressed sentiments nearly brought him into serious trouble with the Government. Disappointment had bred resentment in him, and with that came a return of the defiant spirit that would hear of no restraint. His health gradually gave way, and when, early in 1796, he fell seriously ill, his constitution was too much enfeebled to be able to stand the strain upon it.

A further edition of his *Poems*, including a number written at Ellisland and at Dumfries, was published in 1793; and until his last illness his marvellous power of verse showed but little sign of weakening. To two publications alone—the *Musical Museum* and Thomson's *Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs*—he contributed over two hundred and forty songs in his last eight or nine years.

The end came on 21st July, 1796. When he was dead, some self-reproach was felt by the men who had known his greatness but neglected it. The most original genius of his day had been allowed to waste his life, and this was regretted when it was too late. In one respect, however, no poet can but envy Burns; for no writer ever had a more imperishable place than he in the hearts of his fellow-countrymen, whom he understood, whom he loved, and for whom he wrote.

XII.

WORDSWORTH.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S life was uneventful, as far as externals were concerned. No excess of either good or bad fortune came to disturb its even tenour, and its record—except for the fact of the poems—offers little more of interest than that of any fairly well-to-do, cultured gentleman. Speculation as to what the nature of Wordsworth's poetry might have been had his life been less monotonous is interesting, but as profitless as such speculation usually is. If his poems do not altogether reflect his real nature (for he more than once hinted at instincts within him which he had sternly repressed), they at any rate unerringly reflect the man as he wished to appear to his friends and to the world. They show the artist and the moralist curiously mingled. A keen and very observant love of nature determined him, when he was quite a boy, to devote his powers to celebrating nature in poetry; side by side with this there was the moralising spirit which hampered the artistic sense, and too often led him away from simple lyrical beauty to the tedium or the bathos of didactic verse. The workmanship of his poems suffered from this, for there was always a more or less conscious restraint upon his powers of expression; and the excellent intention evident in his scrupulous simplicity of

I cannot give way to the overpowering
of my feelings upon this mournful occasion,
than put strength of mind to do so —
The last year has thinned off so many
my friends, young and old, and tho' my
with it so much vantage for a life of public
that it would be no kindness to you
here! to yield to the solemn & sad
thoughts and remembrances which
press upon me. It is nearly 40 years
since I first became acquainted with
him who is have just lost; And thro'
with the exception of six weeks when we
were on the Continent together, daily with
my Daughter, I have seen little of him
for the last 20 years, but found him
been habitually present with me,
with an accompanying feeling that he was
still in the flesh. That frail tie
is broken & I, most of those who are
nearest & dearest to us must prepare
and endeavour to follow him. Give my
affectionate love to Sara, and remember me

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

Facsimile (slightly reduced) of a page of a Letter to Henry Nelson Coleridge on the occasion of the death of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.
(Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 34,225, f. 193.)

(Face page 146.

style (which was a deliberate challenge to the artificiality of the earlier schools of poetry) often misses its mark owing to his deficiency in the saving grace of humour.

He was born at Cockermouth, in Cumberland, on 7th April, 1770. His mother died when he was five years old, and his father eight years later. Fortunately they both came of good family; and there were influential and wealthy uncles to take benevolent charge of the future poet and his brothers when they were orphaned. Thanks to their care, a good elementary schooling was followed by three years at Cambridge, where Wordsworth took his degree from St. John's College in 1791.

His school days, he says, were "very happy ones," chiefly because he was left at liberty there, and in the holidays, to read whatever books he fancied. His favourite reading was such as would appeal to any robust-minded boy of the day—*Don Quixote, Gil Bas, Gulliver's Travels,* and the like. His impulse towards poetry was not derived from books, but from nature, whose inspiring influence came upon him, as he tells us, suddenly in his later boyhood. He had, it is true, written some verses as a task at school; but they were, to use his own words, "but a tame imitation of Pope's versification".

His undergraduate days are unmarked except by the fact that the *Evening Walk,* the first poem he published, was written during one of his vacations. It was composed, he tells us, with no particular idea of devoting himself to poetry, but as evidence that he could "do something," in spite of his want of brilliancy in the university examinations.

After leaving Cambridge he lived for a while rather aimlessly in London, provided with a small allowance

by the long-suffering uncles. His inclinations were to some extent in favour of a military career ; but he had no influence to help him to a commission, nor is it conceivable that the life would have been tolerable to him. He felt conscientious scruples against entering the Church, and the Law did not attract him.

For a year, between the winter of 1791 and that of 1792, he lived in France, and was on the point of throwing in his lot with the Revolutionists, when his uncles wisely called him back by the prosaic but effective method of stopping his allowance.

Two more years of indecision followed, during which his mind was passing through the conflict between Reason and Faith that assails the youth of most men of imaginative temperament. The apparent want of aim in his life distressed his friends, but it is evident that the determination that poetry was to be the goal of his endeavours was crystallising in him. In the *Evening Walk* as well as the *Descriptive Sketches* (both published in 1793) his deliberate endeavour to reproduce in poetry "the infinite variety of natural appearances" was manifest, in spite of the want of definite character in their versification.

The happy accident of a small legacy freed him from the necessity of seeking for a definite means of livelihood, and enabled him to settle down, with his sister, to a congenially quiet life in the country. Their affection for one another was intense, liker to that of lovers than of brother and sister. Miss Wordsworth was a woman of uncommon mould ; devoted with absolute single-heartedness to her brother, confident in his powers, sympathetic to the full with all his ideas, and not blind to his weaknesses. Her life with him was no small sacrifice, yet she never seems to have felt it so,

for he consistently gave her the best of himself. In a letter written to a friend a year or two before they settled together she says of her brother that one of the charms of his character is "a sort of restless watchfulness which I know not how to describe, a tenderness that never sleeps, and at the same time such a delicacy of manner as I have observed in few men".

After two years spent in a Dorsetshire village, they removed to Netherstowey in Somersetshire, where Coleridge was then living. Meanwhile Wordsworth's pen had not been idle. He had experimented with various styles of poetry, and had been most successful with a poem he called *The Ruined Cottage*, which afterwards formed part of the first book of *The Excursion*. Coleridge had made Wordsworth's acquaintance on the strength of a certain degree of admiration he felt for the *Evening Walk*, and thus began a friendship as famous as any in the annals of literary history, and one invaluable to Wordsworth, who needed the discerning encouragement he thus gained. Coleridge's eulogium of *The Ruined Cottage* may seem to us excessive; but if we bear in mind the refreshing contrast that the simplicity of Wordsworth's diction must have presented to the artificiality of the accepted masterpieces of his day, and the new poetic impulse that underlay the poet's attempt to connect nature with the soul of man, we can appreciate Coleridge's characterising the poem as "superior to anything in our language which in any way resembles it". It is true that Burns' first volume of poems (for which, it may be mentioned in passing, Wordsworth expressed a generous admiration) had been published while Wordsworth was still at school. But though Burns was to Wordsworth the pioneer of the love of nature in poetry, it was the new

moralising element in the latter's work that appealed to Coleridge.

Their friendship had an immediate result. Intercourse with Coleridge's quick and vigorous mind stirred Wordsworth's faculties, and at once extended the range of his interests. The two friends had much talk as to the value of supernatural, as well as natural, subjects for poetry ; and it was eventually agreed that they were together to compile a volume which, in Wordsworth's words, "was to consist of poems chiefly on supernatural subjects, taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium".

The outcome of this was the volume of *Lyrical Ballads* published at Bristol in 1798. To this Coleridge's contributions were *The Ancient Mariner* and three other poems ; Wordsworth's share included some of the worst as well as some of the best poems he ever wrote, among the latter being the familiar *We are Seven* and the noble *Lines Written above Tintern Abbey.*

In the following year the Wordsworths settled at Grasmere, and in this neighbourhood the poet made his home for the rest of his life. He made, in 1802, a very happy marriage with Miss Mary Hutchinson, a native of Penrith ; and after the marriage his sister still continued to live with him as one of the family. A peaceful home circle, fairly comfortable means (for his wife did not come to him empty-handed), the loved surroundings of lake and mountain, the growing delight in the development of his powers and the encouraging admiration of such men as Coleridge, Southey, De Quincey and Scott, made up Wordsworth's life, and with these he was gratefully content. A tour in Scotland, an occasional trip abroad, were all that

varied it. To him the important incidents of life were bound up with the birth of his poems.

It must not be imagined, however, that he posed as a recluse, or was not tenderly concerned with the fortunes of those dear to him. What he wrote after the death of his brother John, who, though he had seen but little of him since childhood, took a keen interest in his elder brother's work, will serve to show this. "For myself," Wordsworth wrote, "I feel that there is something cut out of my life which cannot be restored. I never thought of him but with hope and delight. . . . I never wrote a line without the thought of giving him pleasure. . . . I hope when I shall be able to think of him with a calmer mind, that the remembrance of him dead will even animate me more than the joy which I had in him living."

The period of eight or nine years spent at Grasmere, years full of innocent family joys, is marked by the appearance of the *Sonnets to Liberty*, in which the poet's nature appears more deeply stirred by outside events than at any other time in his life. His early sympathy with the Revolutionists abroad had vanished before his horror of the deeds of the Revolution, and his shame at France's surrender of her new freedom to a despot. *The Happy Warrior*, in which he depicts his ideal hero, was suggested by Nelson's death, and is as inspiriting a eulogy as any in the language.

A growing family made it necessary for Wordsworth to seek a larger house, and in 1813 he moved from Grasmere to the neighbouring Rydal, and settled at Rydal Mount, a house whose name is familiar to all who know the name of Wordsworth. A piece of good fortune came to him at the same time, in Lord Lonsdale's procuring for him the post of Distributor of

Stamps for the County of Westmoreland. His duties were nominal, and the salary, though not large, enabled him to maintain the easy circumstances that his simple tastes facilitated.

His poetic powers reached their climax in *The Excursion*, which was published in 1814. This somewhat unwieldy epic was received with carelessness in some quarters, and in others attacked with a venom that now appears unjustifiable. It may be readily admitted that it suffers as a poem from the severity of its subject and the didactic spirit that too obtrusively pervades it ; but it is a little surprising that the critics of Wordsworth's day had not perception keen enough to realise that a poet is not necessarily ridiculous because he takes himself very seriously, or patience enough to detach the gems of poetry which in *The Excursion* are studded over an expanse of verse much of which is undeniably uninspiring. Wordsworth took the failure of the book with a stout heart, or rather with the serene self-reliance that the consciousness of the quality of his work gave him. That he should be too self-conscious was inevitable from the life he led ; but he certainly had the artist's power of detaching himself from his work, and judging of its merit with a full recognition both of the conditions that produced it and the appeal it was likely to make to the world of readers.

The Excursion was originally designed to be the second part of "a great philosophic poem on Man, Nature and Society". This was to be called *The Recluse*, and was to have for its principal subject "the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement". The first part, which Wordsworth named *The Prelude*, took the unique form of an autobiography in verse, or, rather, a record of the development of his own mind until it reached

the point at which he realised his poetic mission. However it may be judged as poetry, it is at least an intensely interesting example of self-analysis, and more valuable as giving a knowledge of himself than any biographical document. The great scheme was never proceeded with after the discouraging reception of *The Excursion*; but much that he wrote in the way of short poems, both before and after this, was considered by him in the light of material out of which the edifice might be wrought. They were to be the "cells and oratories" for the edifice, and *The Prelude* was to be the "antechapel".

A year or two before *The Excursion* was published he wrote to Lady Beaumont: "It is impossible that any expectations can be lower than mine concerning the immediate effect of this little work upon what is called the public. I do not here take into consideration the envy and malevolence, and all the bad passions which always stand in the way of a work of any merit from a living poet; but merely think of the pure, absolute, honest ignorance in which all worldlings, of every rank and situation, must be enveloped, with respect to the thoughts, feelings and images on which the life of my poems depends. . . . Trouble not yourself upon their present reception. Of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny? to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think and feel, and, therefore, to become more actively and securely virtuous; this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform long after we (that is, all that is mortal of us) are mouldered in our graves."

These words of the poet's are the best description

of his attitude towards his work. He was conscious of the fact that he must create a public for himself. How well he succeeded, and was justified of his confidence, is shown by the fact that he died Poet Laureate, and had then for a score of years been regarded as the most remarkable man of letters of his day. First the University of Durham, then that of Oxford, honoured themselves and him in conferring their D.C.L. degree upon him ; in 1842 he was awarded a Civil List pension "for distinguished literary merit" ; and on Southey's death, in the following year, he was appointed Poet Laureate.

The finest examples of his verse were written before he was fifty. He was industrious to the end ; but the work of his last thirty years inclined more and more to the purely didactic, and consequently farther from the poetic. The later poems were too often mere dissertations in verse : his earnestness as a thinker outlived his poetic faculty.

Though Wordsworth was self-conscious, he was never affected. The simplicity of his verse was as genuine as its occasional magnificence, and this genuineness was characteristic of himself. He had formed a sober estimate of his own powers, and this, fortified by the sense of the beauty of his aim, armed him against the deprecation of those who did not understand it ; at the same time he was a severe critic of his attempts to reach that aim. He was not always able, as the event proved, to avoid the pitfalls of bathos that lie alongside the path of the ingenuous moralist. It may be doubted whether it would have made much difference to his poetry if he had mixed more with the world, for his was not a nature to be much influenced by externals. To impressions his mind was always open ; but it is

not likely that different circumstances would have altered the deep sense of a definite mission that lay at the root of his moralising. His attitude was deliberate, and he set himself the task of justifying it.

In his old age he wrote to a friend : "It is indeed a deep satisfaction to hope and believe that my poetry will be, while it lasts, a help to the cause of virtue and truth, especially among the young. As for myself, it seems now of little moment how long I may be remembered. When a man pushes off in his little boat into the great seas of Infinity and Eternity, it surely signifies little how long he is kept in sight by watchers from the shore."

He died, with very little pain, after a few weeks of illness, on 23rd April, 1850, and was buried in Grasmere churchyard.

XIII.

SCOTT.

THE kindliness and cheery independence that made Sir Walter Scott so lovable a man were characteristic of him in his earliest days. As a young child he was the idol of the servants of the household, as much because he was "so sweet-tempered a bairn" (as an old nurse of his said) as because he gave so little trouble, and could make himself happy without being looked after. High spirits and a kind heart were invaluable possessions which he retained all his life.

One of a large family, he was born in Edinburgh on 15th August, 1771. In his second year he was seriously attacked by a teething fever, the effects of which resulted in a weakness in his right leg that lamed him for life. Fortunately his constitution was excellent; and this, combined with a wise regimen of open-air life at his grandfather's farm, where there were dogs and a pony to play with and shepherds to roam the fields with, almost routed the evil. He was lame all his life, but vigorous health counterbalanced the disadvantage; and, as he tells us in his fragment of autobiography, by the time he was eight years old he "who in a city had probably been condemned to hopeless and helpless decrepitude, was now a healthy, high-spirited, and, the lameness apart, a sturdy child".

the Cardinal What the Lord would with the Queen and answered for answer that the boy had come to Queen and a present to the Queen Lady but must be cared not to be taken charge of, lest communication there by beyond his commission. His curiosity [illegible] satisfied on this [illegible] he approached his Master and heard him say "Take boy - the packet Thank Cardinal delivered - Thanks good Master Barry Queen" and the boy and was out of sight in an instant Dunstan and Barry returned with the hasty steps to the Earl's private Apartment by the same [illegible] by which had conducted them to Lambeth - tower.

Chapter.

I have sent
this unwelcome - I have sent with them
Now she's a traitor and Camille is
A peer of mercy with her contempt Their Queen
What else should she do to punish Wishes Tale

Here were the Queen in the Earls absence Queen taking her tablets from his pocket he began to write speaking partly to Queen partly to himself. "Queen are strong of Queen must be grounded on love and especially Queen good estate and the hope of Queen they look back towards any comforts or forwards towards the perils Queen may expect themselves will not I think be disputed or Queen staggered unsupported - [illegible] Queen - Hastings is sure and through his means Gloucester & Surrey - Stanley commands in the [illegible] Bedford Buckingham & Pembroke command broken - Hereafter Bedford I command the Queen with their interest so powerful in all the Provinces - My brother of Queen is equal with me by myself in wealth [illegible] and dependence - London Hopkins & all my clerks be commanded the Tower of London and the national treasure deposited there - [illegible] my father & grandfather would never have stooped their hands to the block had they their forecast [illegible] understood

Yours most faithfully
Walter Scott

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

Facsimile of part of a page of the original MS. of *Kenilworth*. (Detached signature from a Letter to Mrs. Slade.) (Brit. Mus., Egerton MS. 1,661, f. 140, and Add. MS. 27,937, f. 65.)

[*Face page* 186.

At school, though he tried the patience of his masters by the capricious manner in which he alternated frivolity with studiousness, the remarkable activity of his mind made him a general favourite. Occasional "flashes of intellect," he says, caused him to "glance like a meteor from one end of the class to the other," and disposed his master to look more kindly on frequent fits of negligence. Out of school hours his ready imagination and his good nature made him very popular with the other boys, for whom he would invent exciting stories by the hour. Their sympathies were enlisted, too, by his plucky efforts to join in their sports in spite of his lameness.

His mind, he said, "retained what hit his fancy". It moved rapidly over any material presented to it, and very soon developed the power of assimilating what was essential, or at any rate what was sympathetic to it, and rejecting the rest. And so he left school (again to quote his own words) with "a great quantity of general information, ill arranged, indeed, and collected without system; yet deeply impressed upon his mind, readily assorted by his power of connection and memory, and gilded by a vivid and active imagination".

His father, who was a prosperous Edinburgh solicitor, naturally wished him to enter the law; and so, when he entered the classes at the university, that became his object. Law was read, and read to a certain extent diligently; but miscellaneous reading, chiefly in romance, was a formidable rival. Of that, indeed, he made a study fully as serious. Spencer, he tells us, he could never read enough of. The desire to read the old French romances in the original incited him to master the difficulties of the language while he was still at school; and before he was out of his teens

he had learned sufficient Italian to read Dante and Ariosto, and sufficient Spanish to read Cervantes.

At the university, where he was always amongst the foremost in any "high jinks" that were toward, he gained the reputation for a gigantic memory, untiring industry on any subject that interested him, and a delight in military topics, outdoor sports and adventurous enterprises. Added to this he seems to have been notably equipped with tact, which led to his being frequently appealed to by his fellow-students as arbitrator or intermediary in their youthful squabbles. It is remarkable, too, that his pursuit of a wide and varied knowledge was avowedly undertaken with the desire for ultimate fame and the conviction that he would attain to it. When he was seven years old he had approved of a friend of the family as a *virtuoso*; "that is to say," he explained, "one who wishes and will know everything". An attack of illness when he was sixteen led to an enforced confinement, during which he browsed voraciously on the literary pastures he best loved; and with regard to his reading his memory, as one of his biographers has aptly said, acted really as a sieve of the most valuable kind, sifting away what was foreign to his genius and assimilating what was suitable to it. He remarks penitently in his account of his early years that historical detail escaped his mind with woeful rapidity; but at the same time his mind became richly stored with just the right impressions of the times of which he read, so that when he came to essay the writing of historical romance his instinct was never at fault, and he was able to reconstruct the life of bygone days with a vividness unattainable by mere industrious research.

Nor was his search for information confined to books.

In his vacations he delighted in long walking tours far and wide over the countryside (thirty miles a day were nothing to the vigorous frame of this lame lad), and in the course of these he everywhere seized upon opportunities of gathering knowledge of the local history and traditions of the neighbourhood.

A frequent companion of his upon these "raids," as Scott liked to call them, afterwards said: "He was *makin' himsell* a' the time, but he didna ken maybe what he was about till years had passed; at first he thought o' little, I dare say, but the queerness and the fun". He had an eager taste for antiquarian research, as much from actual pleasure in the study as from its results, his love for it probably springing in great measure from his inherited reverence for the deep-rooted institutions of his country, chief among them the feudal customs with their picturesque accompaniments. "I do not know anything," he said, "which relieves the mind so much from the sullens as trifling discussions about antiquarian old-womanries. It is like knitting a stocking, diverting the mind without occupying it."

With all this, he made a respectable lawyer, and seven years after his call to the Bar was appointed Sheriff of Selkirkshire, a post carrying with it a salary of some £300 a year. That he was considered competent to undertake this, and, subsequently, the more important position of Clerk of Session at Edinburgh, is proof that he had plodded on conscientiously over the uncongenial paths of Scottish law. Moreover, his duties once accepted, he performed them with vigorous zeal.

Scott did not marry his first love; but a prior attachment, whose severance, under the force of circumstances, caused him deep pain, fortunately did not prevent his finding lifelong happiness with the lady who became

his wife. She, the daughter of a dead French Royalist, was a Miss Margaret Charpentier, who had come to England after her father's death and taken the name of Carpenter. Of a loving, if somewhat shallow, nature, and gifted with considerable sprightliness of wit, she made Scott very happy; and though she may never have been a complete companion to him, her devotion to him and her unfeigned admiration for his powers were sufficient to call forth the tenderest and most appreciative care on his part. They were married in 1797, and settled in a cottage at Lasswade, in Midlothian. From there they removed, not long after Scott's appointment to the Sheriff's post, to a house at Ashestiel, in Selkirkshire.

It was an attempt to translate Bürger's poem of *Lenore* that first led Scott into the path of romantic verse. For some years he had been gathering material for a book on *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border;* and the spirit of the ballads he had lovingly studied for this so pervaded his imagination that he found, to his delight, that he could with facility compose verse in imitation of them. The immediate success of the *Border Minstrelsy* (two volumes of which appeared in 1802, and a third in 1803) inspired him to the effort; and the result was the publication, in 1805, of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel.* The poem was due to a suggestion made to him by Lady Dalkeith, for whom Scott entertained a romantic devotion as the wife of his chieftain's heir. She repeated to him the legend of the goblin page, Gilpin Horner, and asked him to write a ballad upon it. This, as in duty bound, he set out to do; but he found the tale so confused and so little likely to shape well into verse, that it became eventually a mere episode in the poem that appeared as the *Lay.* Writing to a friend of his diffi-

culties with the intractable goblin Scott says : "At length the story appeared so uncouth that I was fain to put it into the mouth of my old minstrel, lest the nature of it should be misunderstood, and I should be suspected of setting up a new school of poetry, instead of a feeble attempt to imitate the old. In the process of the romance, the page, intended to be a principal person in the work, contrived (from the baseness of his natural propensities, I suppose) to slink down stairs into the kitchen, and now he must e'en abide there." It is interesting to mark the instinct of the teller of stories making itself felt in the re-arrangement and development of the tale.

The hold that Scott's poetry took upon the public was astonishing. Its vigour, the "hurried frankness of composition" that Scott used to say was the secret of its popularity, the knowledge of character that it showed, and the poet's perfect command of picturesque detail, came like a revelation to a public long estranged from poetry which moved with any "rush" or fervency. Burns' poems had had a more limited appeal ; their charm was quieter, and their diction naturally restricted their possible public of readers. But here was poetry that could appeal to north and south alike, poetry that seized the mind in spite of itself and ran lilting in a man's head when he had read it. Mr. Hutton, in his *Life of Scott*, relates an amusing incident illustrative of this. Two old gentlemen, he says, complete strangers, were passing each other in a London street on a dark night ; one of them happened to be repeating to himself, as he walked, the last lines of the account of Flodden Field in *Marmion*, "Charge, Chester, charge!" —when suddenly a reply came out of the darkness, "On, Stanley, on!" whereupon they finished the death

of Marmion between them, took off their hats to each other, and parted laughing.

The *Lay* brought Scott over £750. He had already cleared some £600 by the *Border Minstrelsy;* and these sums, without precedent in his day as payment for poetry, were far surpassed by what he received for subsequent poems. So eagerly was any new work from his pen anticipated, that he received a thousand guineas for *Marmion* before it was completed, and half as much again for half the copyright of *The Lord of the Isles.*

Marmion appeared in 1808, *The Lady of the Lake* in 1810; *Rokeby* and *The Bridal of Triermain* in 1813, and *The Lord of the Isles* in 1815. After that Scott became "the Author of *Waverley*," and in prose romance found the true field for his genius. In each successive poem the narrative instinct had gained ground; the verse became more concerned with the march of events than of passions, and the romance more that of incident than of character. And so, by a natural transition, Scott the popular poet developed into Scott the great novelist.

His fertility and industry were prodigious. During the eight years he lived at Ashestiel he wrote *Marmion*, *The Lady of the Lake*, and a life of Dryden, prepared a large collected edition of his own writings, and edited a number of other works—all this, it must be borne in mind, in addition to a conscientious discharge of his duties as Sheriff. Besides this, for five years of the eight he also performed, as deputy, the work of a Clerk of the Session. This he had undertaken, without pay, to secure the reversion of the post when the nominal holder, who was an old man and past his work, died. A busy home life and the happy cares of a growing family added to the calls upon Scott's time. His

appetite for work was fortunately insatiable. "It was enough to tear me in pieces," he afterwards told Lockhart, "but there was a wonderful exhilaration about it all; my blood was kept at fever pitch; I felt as if I could have grappled with anything and everything; then there was hardly one of all my schemes that did not afford me the means of serving some poor devil of a brother author". His kindness of heart was invariable, and in consequence he was overwhelmed with applications for work and help from his humbler brethren of the pen, seldom without result.

The same kindliness marked his relations with every one in and about his home circle. He was the most unselfish and indulgent of fathers. A real companion to his children, he never allowed their interruptions of his work to appear other than a pleasure to him, and no enterprise of theirs was thought complete unless he were included. To all his servants, as one of them said, he behaved and spoke as if they were his blood-relations. His love for his dogs is historical; indeed, every domestic animal for miles round seemed to consider him its special friend. Much fun was made of him at one time by his visitors on account of the violent affection displayed towards him by a small black pig, and the climax was reached when an amiable hen attached herself to him with embarrassing pertinacity.

His appointment as Clerk of Session in his own right, made, in 1812, an acceptable addition to his income, and he now considered himself free to indulge his desire of purchasing a property and establishing himself as "laird". Abbotsford, on the Tweed, was fixed upon. He bought a tract of land there and set to work to embellish it, and to build the house which by degrees

was amplified till it became the stately Abbotsford o his later years, a house where lavish hospitality wa the rule and its master delighted in imagining himsel the feudal head of his devoted following of retainers.

The removal of the family to Abbotsford, as he wrot to a friend, "baffled all description. We had twenty five cartloads of the veriest trash in nature, beside dogs, pigs, ponies, poultry, cows, calves, bare-headec wenches and bare-breeched boys." He describes "th procession of furniture, in which old swords, bows targets and lances made a very conspicuous show. A family of turkeys was accommodated within the helme of some *preux chevalier* of ancient border fame, and th very cows, for aught I know, were bearing banners anc muskets."

Scott's generosity of disposition was, unfortunatel for him, accompanied with a want of prudence witl regard to money matters. It was in consequence o this—accentuated by the difficulties into which bac management had brought a publishing firm with whicl he had intimately associated himself, and the fact tha a large proportion of the purchase-money of his nev estate was borrowed—that, soon after he settled a Abbotsford, he found his financial affairs somewha seriously entangled. Fortunately, however, an un looked for success in a new direction awaited him and by the help of this the crisis was tided over.

While at Ashestiel, nine years previously, he hac begun to work upon a prose romance dealing with th Jacobite fortunes. This, which he had laid aside a the time, he now took up again. His turning his atten tion to prose was undoubtedly to a great extent due t his shrewd recognition of the fact that in Byron (who in 1812, had "awoke to find himself famous" witl

Childe Harold) a greater poet had arisen whose popularity threatened to swamp his own. Although Byron, after a preliminary skirmish of criticism, was whole-hearted in his admiration of Scott's verse, and took pains to let him know how fully this admiration was shared by all, from the Prince Regent downwards, in the South, Scott was convinced that "Byron hit the mark, where he did not even pretend to fledge the arrow," and so, fortunately for the world, determined to see what he could do, "in the big bow-wow style," in prose.

Waverley, for this was the Jacobite story in question, was finished, and published in July 1814. Many reasons have been assigned for Scott's publishing it anonymously, and for so long persisting in maintaining his *incognito* with regard to his novels. He half laughingly maintained to one of his friends, who was in the secret, that he was not sure that it would be considered quite decorous for him, as a Clerk of Session, to write novels. He was certainly also fully alive to the greater independence that this course gave him, and to the stimulating effect that curiosity was sure to have upon the public interest in the books. Moreover, he seems to have fully enjoyed the mystification, with the boyish sense of fun that never deserted him. He took great pains to throw inquirers off the scent, and did not definitely acknowledge the authorship till near the close of his career.

The rapidity with which he worked enabled him to further puzzle the public by producing in his own name what seemed to be as much work as a man, duly performing his legal duties, and giving as much time as any other to his friends, could possibly accomplish. For instance, in the five years that followed the ap-

pearance of *Waverley* he published *The Lord of the Isles*, a large work on *Border Antiquities*, *The Field of Waterloo*, an edition of Swift, a collected edition of his own poems, and various treatises on kindred subjects, besides *Guy Mannering*, *The Antiquary*, three series of *Tales of My Landlord*, *Rob Roy*, *Ivanhoe*, *The Monastery*, and *The Abbot*.

Turning to the end of his literary life we see the same amazing fertility and versatility. In three years, between 1827 and 1830, he published two series of *Chronicles of the Cannongate*, a *Life of Napoleon*, four series of *Tales of a Grandfather*, *Religious Discourses*, *Anne of Gierstein*, a play called *The Doom of Devorgoil*, *Lectures on Demonology*, and a *History of Scotland* in two volumes, besides editing legal and other works. And this phenomenal output, undertaken at the spur of urgent necessity—for the failure of his publishing house had involved him in the most serious liabilities—came from him when he had barely recovered from an attack of illness so grave that his life had been despaired of.

Meanwhile his public life continued as active as ever. He was persecuted with correspondence and the pertinacity of "lion hunters," whose attacks upon his time he bore with the utmost good humour. There was open house at Abbotsford, where hosts of guests claimed his attention, and the entire country-side of humbler folk regarded "the laird" as their counsellor and arbitrator in all their difficulties. Added to this, in the midst of his illness he set to work to organise a body of volunteers for the defence of the district, at a moment when it was feared that the riots in the northern counties of England would spread across the Border.

In 1815, when Scott was in London, he was invited to dine with the Prince Regent, who gratified him with a friendship that did the Regent honour ; and when at last the latter came to the throne one of his first acts was to confer upon Scott the distinction of a baronetcy. Some years before this Scott had refused the offer of Laureateship, from the laudable desire not to run the risk of being thought by a public, which had shown him so much favour, to have appropriated "a petty emolument which might do real service to some poorer brother of the Muses". He had the satisfaction of securing the offer of the post to Southey, to whom it did "do real service," and so was freed from the difficulty of accepting what he considered a "ridiculous office".

In the same year (1820) that he was created baronet, both Oxford and Cambridge Universities offered him honorary degrees, but illness and other causes prevented his ever attending to have the degrees formally conferred.

The tremendous strain of his work at last broke down his constitution ; and recurring fits of illness, aggravated by grief at his wife's death and the excitement of political agitation, culminated, in the autumn of 1831, in an attack so severe that his doctors gave up all hope of working any permanent improvement in his health, and peremptorily ordered him a journey to the South as an escape from the rigours of a Scottish winter. A frigate was placed at his disposal by the Admiralty, and in this he set sail for Malta. Shortly before this the Government had paid him a signal honour by offering him a seat on the Privy Council, a distinction never before proposed to a man of letters solely on account of his literary abilities. Scott was obliged to refuse,

but was deeply sensible of the tribute to his personal and public character.

From Malta he went to Naples, and from there to Rome and Venice, but with little result as far as health was concerned. Even then his vigour was not finally conquered, for in Naples he wrote a novel (which was never published) on the subject of *The Siege of Malta*.

Returning through Germany in 1832, a fresh attack of illness prostrated him on the way, and filled him with a craving to return to Abbotsford. He was carried thither, but only to die. On the 11th of July, when he at last saw his beloved home again, a feeble flicker of life revived in him; but a few days later, when his friend Mr. Laidlaw said to him that he was glad to hear he had had a little repose, he sadly shook his head and said: "No, Willie, no repose for Sir Walter but in the grave". He lingered for two months, scarcely conscious, and died tranquilly on the 21st of September, 1832. Five days later he was laid beside his fathers in Dryburgh Abbey.

Scott's courageous struggle during the last five years of his life to pay off the enormous personal liability thrown upon him by the failure of the publishing house is one of the finest things in literary history. He was liable to the extent of £130,000, and he nearly succeeded in paying his creditors in full. These facts speak for themselves, and are at once testimony to his marvellous hold upon his public, as well as to the heroism with which he undertook incessant and arduous work at a time when he had well earned rest and had imagined himself secure from any such reverse of fortune. A remark of the Earl of Dudley, when he heard of the disaster, may be taken as representative of the affection in which Scott was held. "Scott ruined!"

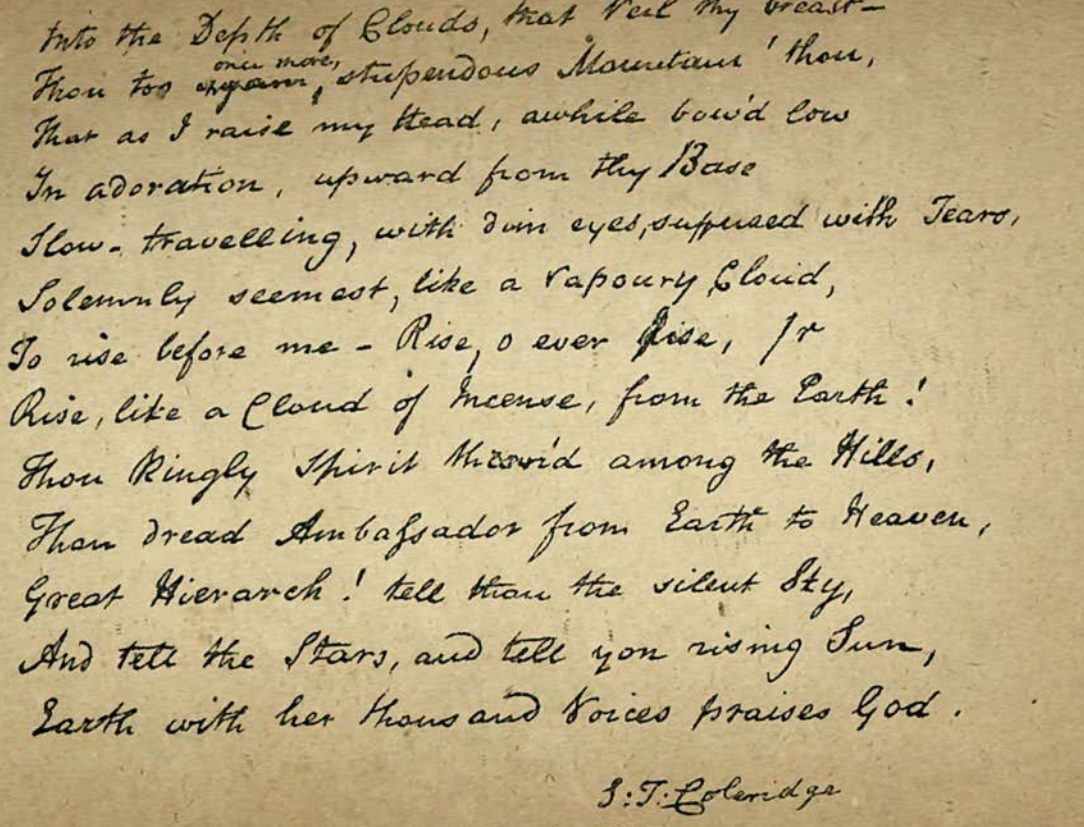
he exclaimed, "the author of *Waverley* ruined! Good God! let every man to whom he has given months of delight give him a sixpence, and he will rise to-morrow morning richer than Rothschild." Scott's pride, however, would have forbidden any such "testimonialising," even had it been the fashion of the day. He would hear of no assistance, but faced his troubles with a stout heart and nearly vanquished them. None grudged him the happy delusion that came upon him when his mind was impaired by his last illness, that his debts were all discharged and he was free. He had, it was true, been at times too apt to anticipate his income, or live beyond it, but more than that could be forgiven to a man of his character and one to whom the world was indebted for so much delight.

A man's familiar letters are perhaps the surest indexes to his temperament; and in Scott's there is continually evident the extreme kindliness of disposition that made every one love him who knew him. In them all there is never a line that is in the least degree ill-natured. He was absolutely free from the taint of jealousy, though his judgment of other writers was discriminating. An affectionate husband and father, the best of companions, the most genial of hosts and the kindest of lairds, he was a man whose memory for its own sake would long have been kept green by his friends, rich and humble, even had he not been the inimitable "Author of *Waverley*".

XIV.

COLERIDGE.

"SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE—Logician, Metaphysician, Bard!" So Charles Lamb, in an often quoted passage, sums up Coleridge the thinker and poet. Though a writer in *Blackwood*, immediately after Coleridge's death, maintained that he "alone perhaps of all men that ever lived was always a poet—in all his moods, and they were many—inspired," it was less his poetic achievement than his remarkable personality that won Coleridge his immortality. His weakness of will prevented his ever doing justice to his exceptional powers, with the result that the history of his life is a record of half-accomplished undertakings. His memory as a poet is kept alive by one perfect poem, *The Ancient Mariner;* but even without that the testimony of his friends would have preserved the memory of the man, who was never other than remarkable, from the time when he was Lamb's "inspired charity-boy" to the day of his death. "The only wonderful man I ever knew," said Wordsworth. "The largest and most spacious intellect, the subtlest and most comprehensive that has yet existed among men," said De Quincey, who was none too lenient in his judgments. "The only person I ever knew," said Hazlitt, "who answered to the idea of a man of genius." "A sublime man,—a king of men," Carlyle called him; and Southey, who knew him best, wrote to a friend, "I


Into the Depth of Clouds, that Veil thy breast—
Thou too one mass, stupendous Mountain! thou,
That as I raise my head, awhile bow'd low
In adoration, upward from thy Base
Slow-travelling, with dim eyes suffused with Tears,
Solemnly seemest, like a vapoury Cloud,
To rise before me—Rise, O ever rise, Jr
Rise, like a Cloud of Incense, from the Earth!
Thou Kingly Spirit throned among the Hills,
Thou dread Ambassador from Earth to Heaven,
Great Hierarch! tell thou the silent Sky,
And tell the Stars, and tell yon rising Sun,
Earth with her thousand Voices praises God.

S. T. Coleridge

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

Facsimile (slightly reduced) from a copy of his *Hymn before Sunrise*, made by Coleridge for Mrs. Brabant. (Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 34,225, f. 8*b*.)

[*Face page* 170.

am grieved that you have never met Coleridge. All other men whom I have ever known are mere children to him, and yet all is palsied by a total want of moral strength."

The youngest of a large family, Coleridge was born, on 21st October, 1772, at Ottery St. Mary, in Devonshire. His father was a kind-hearted country clergyman, of some culture ; his mother a woman of far less education, but sensible and industrious, and unaffectedly ambitious for her children's future. His temperament in boyhood unmistakably suggested that he had powers above the average ; and this, together with the fact that he was their youngest child, led his parents to spoil him, with the natural result that he was unpopular with his brothers and sisters. In the account Coleridge has left us of these childish days he seems, writing at a long distance from the events he relates, to make too much of an isolation that any child would probably experience under the circumstances. He says he was miserable and solitary, and so "became a dreamer, and acquired an indisposition to all bodily activity". He complains that, while the old women praised him because he was clever, his schoolfellows despised him because he could not play games, and that while the latter treatment made him "fretful and passionate" the former made him vain. In fact, he was an unusually clever boy who was thoroughly spoilt. The lack of vigour in his nature caused him to acquiesce in this, and he was rapidly developing the characteristics of a prig when he was sent, in his tenth year, to Christ's Hospital.

There a more bracing moral atmosphere and a severer discipline worked wonders with him. Though still fonder of solitude and books than of sports, he became popular with the other boys and evidently was

not unhappy upon the whole. He was even able to look back afterwards with complacency upon several well-merited floggings, one of the most wholesome having taken place when, after a course of Voltaire, he stoutly professed himself an atheist, at which the master promptly set to work to flog the infidelity out of him, and succeeded.

Though he had already some taste for poetry, it was far from being his ruling passion. Probably from the pleasure it gave him to exercise a mind that was unusually alert, he was fondest of dabbling in metaphysical speculations. It was a strange taste for a boy of his years, but he says that nothing else pleased him. History, poetry, novels, romances, all became insipid compared with the joys of metaphysical or theological controversy. His accomplishments in this respect surrounded him with a certain awe in the eyes of his schoolfellows, who treated him, as Lamb tells us, with a deference that might have proved exceedingly bad for him had not a happy accident drawn his affections away from metaphysics to poetry.

He had fallen desperately in love with a certain Mary Evans, the sister of one of his schoolfellows, and when in this "melting mood" he came across the sonnets of a mediocre poet named Bowles. These so impressed and influenced him that poetry became the ideal of his life. He could talk of nothing but these verses, and in his proselytising enthusiasm made some forty copies of them in manuscript to distribute to his friends. What peculiar quality it was in Bowles' poems that so appealed to him it is now difficult to understand; but the fact remains that so good a judge as Wordsworth was full of admiration for them. They must have had a merit, relative to the poetry of their day,

that we cannot now so well appreciate. Anyhow, they came as a spark of divine fire to Coleridge, kindling his poetic impulse ; and so we may be grateful to them.

In 1791 Coleridge went, with a Christ's Hospital scholarship, to Jesus College, Cambridge. Not much is recorded of his college life, except that he worked fairly hard at his prescribed studies, and read still harder on his own account, gathering round him a circle of friends whose greatest pleasure was the conversation always to be enjoyed in his rooms. Coleridge was all his life an exceptionally good talker ; indeed, he probably shone more brilliantly in conversation than in anything he wrote. He loved the mental exercise of argument, to which a naturally quick mind and ready grasp of any subject inclined him. Early in 1794 he took an extraordinary step. The cause seems to have been partly disappointed love for Mary Evans, partly the pressure of debts contracted at Cambridge. The result was that, being absolutely ignorant of horsemanship or soldiering, he suddenly left Cambridge and enlisted, under the name of Silas Tomkyn Comberback, in the 15th Dragoon Guards. It was impossible that he should make anything but an execrable dragoon ; but he won over his unlettered comrades to do many of his distasteful duties for him, in return for his aptitude in writing love-letters for them and beguiling their leisure with the invention of wonderful tales. By a happy accident (not without some contrivance on his own part) his retreat was discovered by his friends, influence was powerful to obtain his discharge, and, after severe admonition at the hands of the Master and fellows, he was again received at Jesus College. In the autumn of the same year, however, he left Cambridge after a

violent altercation with the Master on the question of his views as to the regeneration of society.

The incitement to this new upheaval in Coleridge's ideas resulted from a visit he had paid to his old schoolfellow Robert Southey, at Oxford, where he also met Robert Lovell. Both Lovell and Southey were deeply bitten with the revolutionary ideas rampant in France, and full of theories as to the right conduct of life. They had concocted a scheme for a socialistic existence which they named Pantisocracy, and found a ready convert in Coleridge. It was decided between them that they should found a new community on Pantisocratical principles. To this end they were to proselytise vigorously, in the hope of gathering together a band of enthusiasts who would emigrate to some spot suitable for the birth of their ideal commonwealth. Each member was to take a wife with him ; and Southey's mate was found for him, ready to hand. Lovell had already married a certain Mary Fricker, who lived at Bristol ; Southey was engaged to one of her sisters, who shared her enthusiasm for this wonderful plan ; Coleridge promptly fell in love with a third sister ; a fourth was approached by another Pantisocrat, but declined the honour of his addresses.

For the time being everything seemed to smile upon the scheme. "A most intelligent young man," whom Coleridge met constantly at a tavern in London, persuaded him that on the banks of the Susquehanna (where, it may be mentioned, the young man had land to sell) the Pantisocrats would find all that their soul could desire. Unfortunately funds were necessary, and these were not forthcoming. Lectures at Bristol brought in but a little, and what Coleridge and Southey could make by their pens amounted to very little more.

A *deus ex machina* appeared in the person of a kindly Bristol bookseller, Joseph Cottle, who had interested himself in Coleridge. He made a generous offer to both Coleridge and Southey, proposing to publish a book of poems for each of them and meantime to advance to each a sum of thirty guineas. On the head of this both poets were promptly married, Coleridge in October 1795, and Southey a month later. Under the sense of the new responsibilities brought with it by matrimony, the Pantisocratic fervour began to wane. Southey, to Coleridge's disgust, accepted an offer made him by a rich uncle, and set off with his wife to Lisbon; Lovell was taken ill, and died; and the other Pantisocrats dispersed. Coleridge settled with his wife in a cottage at Clevedon, near Bristol, and gave himself up contentedly to love and poetry.

Early in 1796 Cottle, according to their arrangement, published the volume of *Poems on Various Subjects*. It was received by the critics with respect, but with no particular enthusiasm. The poems were, however, sufficiently admired and sufficiently read to warrant Coleridge's preparing a second edition in the following year. Meanwhile he was hard pressed, as he said, by "two inexorable taskmasters—bread and cheese". The money Cottle had advanced for the poems was spent; and something must be found for present needs. Not yet rid of his desire to conduct a propaganda of his ideas respecting society and religion, Coleridge projected a journal which was to combat the "war against freedom," and enable all men "to know the truth, that the truth might make them free". He started off upon a tour of canvass for subscriptions to the journal, preaching Unitarian sermons and discoursing upon Liberty by the way; and eventually, when about a thousand

subscribers had been enlisted, the first number of *The Watchman* appeared on 1st March, 1796. It lived for ten numbers and then died ingloriously. "The reason for relinquishing it," wrote Coleridge in the last number, "is short and simple—the work does not pay for its expenses."

By this time Coleridge's character had settled down from much of the unrest that inevitably accompanies the youth of a man of genius. He still maintained his enthusiasms—it was probably these that made his personality so attractive—but they were tempered by a larger experience; and, in spite of the constant anxieties that want of means brought with it, he found a good deal of happiness in his new life.

His canvassing tour on behalf of *The Watchman* bore unexpectedly good fruit in the shape of some valuable friendships that sprang from acquaintances then made. Coleridge irresistibly impressed every one who came across him. His conversation was brilliant, reflecting a mind of exceptional vigour; and his ardent defence of his opinions was always carried on good-humouredly, and was backed by a certainty of knowledge that usually made him master of the situation. Had he never published a line of prose or poetry, he would have been remembered as a great man by all who had known him; for his character, at all events in his happier days, exhaled that indefinable influence that a great mind projects upon those of ordinary calibre.

Charles Lloyd, the son of a Birmingham banker, became one of his most fervent personal disciples. Coleridge's conversation "was to him as a revelation from heaven," and, in order to profit by intercourse with him, Lloyd induced his parents to agree to his offering to board permanently with the Coleridges.

The arrangement was made, and the composite household took up its quarters in a cottage which another friend of Coleridge had procured for him at Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire. For a time all went well, and, though his financial anxieties were increased by Lloyd's withdrawal after a few months, the two years he spent at Nether Stowey were probably the happiest, as they were poetically the most prolific, of Coleridge's life. Not only were his finest poems—*The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, *Kubla Khan*, and others of less note—written there, but it was there also that he most enjoyed the happiness of his friendship with Wordsworth.

The two poets had met while Coleridge was at Bristol, and each had conceived an unbounded admiration for the other, Coleridge mainly for Wordsworth's poetry, Wordsworth perhaps more for Coleridge's personal charm than for anything he had written. "The giant Wordsworth," Coleridge wrote; "I speak with heart-felt sincerity . . . when I tell you that I felt a little man by his side, and yet I do not think myself a less man than I formerly thought myself." The best testimony to the hold Coleridge gained upon Wordsworth's affections was the removal of the latter to Alfoxden, near Nether Stowey, when the Coleridges went to their Nether Stowey cottage. A letter written by Wordsworth's sister at this time gives a vivid picture of Coleridge as she knew him. "You had a great loss in not seeing Coleridge," she says. "He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good-tempered and cheerful, and, like William, interests himself so much about every little trifle. At first I thought him very plain, that is, for about three minutes; he is pale, thin, has

a wide mouth, thick lips and not very good teeth, longish loose-growing half-curling rough black hair. But if you hear him speak for five minutes you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, and not very dark but grey, such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression ; but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind : it has more of the 'poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling' than I ever witnessed. He has fine dark eyebrows and an overhanging forehead."

Side by side with this may be set Hazlitt's description of his "clear complexion," his forehead "broad and high," his mouth "open and eloquent, his chin good-humoured and round ; but his nose, the rudder of the face, the index of the will, was small, feeble, nothing—like what he has done ".

The two poets' walks together over the Quantock hills have become historical. *The Ancient Mariner* was the outcome of one of these. In the autumn of 1797 Coleridge started off with Wordsworth for a short walking tour, the expenses of which were to be met by the sale of a poem they were jointly to compose as they went along. The collaboration was not a success, and Coleridge took the poem into his own hands, inspired by an idea that they thought out between them. This was the germ of *The Ancient Mariner*. The poem was not sold at the time, but grew into the "inimitable poem" (as Coleridge proudly and justly called it) that was published in Wordsworth's volume of *Lyrical Ballads* in the following spring.

The close of Coleridge's twenty-sixth year practically marks the close of his poetic life. The mind of this extraordinary man found, as he grew older or as circumstances compelled, various outlets for its activity,

but as an original poet he never again reached the level of this period. It seemed as though the spur of Wordsworth's companionship had been necessary to keep alive the impulse that was not by any means the strongest in Coleridge's life. It is probably not unreasonable to think that he would have been happiest as a leader of men—in some position, even that of a great preacher, where his personal influence could have its full effect and the wide opportunities of oratory enable him to give the rein to the crowding thoughts that besieged his mind. He was, moreover, constitutionally too weak of purpose to be able to fix his aim long in one direction. Even had external causes not necessitated it, the restlessness of his nature would have disturbed his poetic life and led him into other fields of activity.

For the present, however, there was urgent necessity that he should earn some money, and his thoughts turned to the Unitarian ministry. Ever since his Cambridge days he had been an eager upholder of Unitarian principles, and he was secure in the knowledge of his powers of eloquence. A pulpit was found for him in a chapel at Shrewsbury, where for a short time in the early part of 1798 he performed a preacher's duties. It was during this time that he met Hazlitt, who has left a graphic account of Coleridge's force as an extempore preacher. So marked was the impression he created, that it seemed probable that, were he to persevere in this new work, he would reach a position equal to that of the greatest preachers of his day. But it was unlikely that Coleridge would persevere, and, as the event proved, a fortunate chance decided his course of action for him. The two brothers Wedgwood, sons of the famous potter, had made his acquaintance a few

years previously, and had been much interested in his career as a poet. Apprehensive that his new success might lead him to desert poetry for the pulpit, they generously offered him an annuity of £150 a year if he would undertake to abandon the ministry and devote himself to the study of poetry and philosophy. To this Coleridge gladly assented ; and in September 1798 set out, with Wordsworth and his sister, for Germany, there to pursue his philosophic studies.

He was for some eight months in Germany, and made so good use of his opportunities for mastering the language that a little while after his return he wrote his translation of Schiller's *Wallenstein*, one of the ablest examples of verse translation in existence. The book brought him no profit, however, and he was glad in 1799 to undertake regular journalistic work on the staff of *The Morning Post*. His work on this paper, to which Lamb, Southey and Wordsworth all contributed, was exceedingly good ; so good indeed that, could he have brought himself to continue in it, he might have enjoyed an easy income—some £2,000 a year, he writes to a friend, he could make by journalism if he were so disposed. But the demon of restlessness again took hold of him. He told his editor that he "could not give up the country and the lazy reading of old folios for two thousand times two thousand pounds," and abandoned London for Keswick, where Wordsworth was already settled.

It may perhaps be urged that it is difficult, in the face of the various careers taken up and dropped by Coleridge, to appreciate his claim to the epithets of "great" and "wonderful" that his friends in all sincerity applied to him. They are justified, however, by the fact that in each of the "inspired moods" that the

writer in *Blackwood* attributed to him he showed himself a master of what he undertook. His poems had shown him to be, at his best, a poet of the first rank. As a preacher he would have outstripped the reputation of any of his day; as a conversationalist he was unrivalled. As a journalist his versatility of mind and wideness of sympathy, together with an oratorical luxuriance of language, made so deep an impression upon his editor as to induce him to offer Coleridge a half share in his two papers, would he but consent to remain in London and work on them.

At first the new home and the new life at Keswick was a success. His health, which had latterly given him some trouble, improved, and his spirits with it. He still contributed to *The Morning Post*, and, under the influence of Wordsworth's presence and a visit from the Lambs, he wrote some more poetry. The Southeys joined the circle at Keswick, sharing the house of which the Coleridges already occupied half; and for a time, as Coleridge wrote, "at home all was peace and love".

In 1803 began the period of misery and darkness that overshadowed Coleridge's life for fifteen years. He had returned home, ill and weak, from a tour in Scotland with the Wordsworths, when in an evil hour he had recourse to a quack medicine known as the "Kendal Black Drop". Dabbling in medical writings, he had found a record of its curing a case which he imagined to be similar to his own. The "Black Drop" worked miracles for the moment, but the cure was not permanent. Again and again Coleridge had recourse to the remedy, which, when it was too late, he discovered to be nothing more or less than opium. His weakness of will, even when he realised this, made it impossible

for him to abandon the drug that was gradually exercising its deadly fascination upon him; and he was growing steadily worse in bodily health when a friend in Malta invited him to visit him there.

He was more than two years away from England, but the change did him no good. It was, indeed, not to be expected that such an expedition as this, made by himself, could be anything but a danger to a man in his condition. Wordsworth wrote of him to a friend at this time: "He is worse in body than you seem to believe; but the main cause lies in his own management of himself, or rather want of management. . . . Poor fellow, there is no one thing which gives me so much pain as the witnessing such a waste of unequalled powers."

For a short time Coleridge acted temporarily as secretary to the Governor of Malta; but the duties wearied him, and did not absorb his interest sufficiently to drive the invading evil out of his mind. A visit to Sicily on a Government commission, followed by one to Rome, had no better effect; and in August 1806 he returned to England, sick in body, but far sicker in mind; his power of resistance to the seductions of the drug almost gone; "ill, penniless, and worse than homeless," as he himself wrote.

He went back to Keswick. There the sight of his wife and children filled him with self-reproach, and the growing fame of Southey and Wordsworth tortured him with remorse at the thought of the way he was wasting his abilities.

In this unhappy condition he continued for eight or nine years more. At times he made an effort to throw off the thraldom of the opium, but without any real success. It was ruining his physical and mental health.

It caused, as can be well conceived, first misunderstandings and then a final rupture between himself and his wife. It spoilt every undertaking he entered upon. Sir Humphrey Davy had procured him the delivery of some lectures on the Fine Arts at the Royal Institution. He struggled through a first series with some success ; but when a second was announced, and the audience was four times sent away from the doors owing to the lecturer's "sudden illness," it became impossible to conceal the state he was in. An attempt to publish *The Friend*, a journal of "politics, philosophy, literature and the fine arts," ended in as grievous failure as *The Watchman* project of earlier days. Journalism and miscellaneous lecturing barely earned him a pittance sufficient to keep him alive. His only piece of good fortune was a considerable success made with a play, *Remorse*, which he had written at Sheridan's suggestion nearly twenty years before. Byron, who was then high in popular favour, behaved very generously to Coleridge, lent him money, and induced the management at Drury Lane to mount the piece, which ran long enough to bring Coleridge some two or three hundred pounds. He tried to follow up its success with another, but he was unequal to the task.

Fortunately that was his darkest hour. Nothing all his life is more creditable to Coleridge than the tremendous effort he made, and made successfully, to emerge from the slough into which he had sunk. After a heart-rending conflict between remorse and the craving for what he knew was ruining him—weeks spent in the most terrible agony of body and soul—he forced himself to realise that his only hope lay in bringing his shattered senses under the control of some one who

would severely discipline him, and guard him, in spite of himself, from the haunting danger.

He put himself into the hands of a Dr. Gillman, at Highgate, in 1816, and made his home with him for the rest of his life. By degrees he was cured. It was a long and painful progress. When a man is over forty such a regeneration is a difficult matter ; but his determination, aided by the kind and sympathetic treatment he received, in the end conquered the evil. He regained some of his power of working, and, though deeply disappointed at the reception of what he wrote—for the critics had now scarcely a word to say of it but what was discouraging—he persevered. His poem of *Christabel* (written years before, but never printed till now) was bitterly attacked. His *Biographia Literaria*, an autobiography of his literary life, met with no kinder fate; even his former admirer Hazlitt writing, most unjustly, of its " maudlin egotism and mawkish spleen " ; and a collection of his poems written between 1793 and 1817 (published with the title of *Sibylline Leaves*) was denied any recognition.

At last, however, his courage met with some reward, and the tide of adversity turned and retreated. *Aids to Reflection*, a philosophical work dealing mainly with religious speculation and its difficulties, was more favourably received. Mr. Gillman's house at Highgate, owing to Coleridge's presence there, became a centre of literary thought ; the King was induced to grant him a pension out of his private purse ; and in the society of a very few old friends who were staunch to him, and a number of younger ones attracted from the rising generation of men of letters, the evening of his life passed, not happily, indeed, but with a certain degree of serenity. Carlyle, in a well-known passage in his *Life*

of John Sterling, describes Coleridge in these years as looking down on London from Highgate Hill "like a sage escaped from the inanity of life's battle, attracting towards him the thoughts of innumerable brave souls still engaged there. . . . A sublime man, who alone in those dark days had saved the crown of his spiritual manhood."

The end came on 25th July, 1834. He had much suffering to endure in his final illness, but at the last hour the pain left him, and death came to him tranquilly as a gentle release.

XV.

BYRON.

In person and temperament Byron was an epitome of his immediate ancestors. Born of a handsome and profligate father and a mother of inflammable temper, and the grandson of an Admiral Byron who was an example of the best type of eighteenth-century "sea dog," the poet's character reflected something of all three. His personal beauty and the inflammability of his heart have become historical; he was morbidly sensitive and occasionally passionate—his mother's legacy to him; while from the old admiral we may imagine him to have inherited the love of adventure and chivalrous enthusiasm for a right cause that would have drawn the eyes of the world to him even had he not possessed his great poetic gift.

He was born in London on 22nd January, 1788. His mother was a Gordon, and heiress to considerable estates in Aberdeenshire; but her husband had soon contrived to dissipate her fortune. Before the boy was three years old his father had fled abroad to escape his creditors, and died there, leaving his deserted wife and child settled in a small house in Aberdeen and almost without means. By his father's death Byron became heir presumptive to the peerage then held by his grand-uncle—a half-demented man of evil reputation, living a solitary life under the shadow of a

Athens Nov 11th 1810

Dear Sir,

Yours arrived on the first inst. it tells me I am ruined. — It is in the power of God, the Devil, and Man, to make me poor and miserable, but neither the second nor third shall make me sell Newstead, and by the aid of the first I will persevere in this resolution — — My "father's house shall not be made a den of thieves" — Newstead shall not be sold — — I am some thousand miles from home with few resources, and the prospect of their daily becoming less. I have neither friend nor counsellor my only English servant departs with this letter, my situation is forlorn enough for a man of my birth and former expectations.-do not mistake this for complaint- however, I state the simple fact; and will never degrade myself by lamentations. You have my answer. —

Commend me to your family, I perceive Hargreaves is your partner, he always promised to turn out well, and Charles I am sure is a very fine fellow. — As for the others I can't pretend to jour = julcy. I present my respects to all the ladies, and I suppose I may kiss Harriet as you or Mrs Hanson will be my proxy, provided she is not grown too tall for such a token of remembrance -

I must not forget Mrs Hanson who has often been a mother to me, and as you have always been a friend I beg you to believe me with all sincerity

yours Byron

J. Hanson Esq.
6 Chancery Lane
London

GEORGE GORDON BYRON, LORD BYRON.
Facsimile (reduced) of a Letter to his Solicitor, John Hanson. (Brit. Mus., Egerton MS. 2,611, f. 214.)

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conviction for manslaughter as the outcome of a duel. This Lord Byron, popularly known as "the wicked lord," outlived his sons, his brother and his grandson; and so the peerage descended to the future poet when he was a boy of ten.

Though Byron's mother had occasional fits of a tumultuous kind of affection for her son, she more usually abused and raged at him, and it is little wonder that he never felt any love for her. To add to the effect of her treatment of him, his feeling of resentment was increased by a deformity with which he was born; a lameness, which, increased by ignorant surgical treatment, was made harder to bear by his mother's heartless mockery. Like all abnormally sensitive children he was immediately amenable to kindness, but of that he had little from his mother. Her hysterical, passionate attitude to him, alternating between senseless petting and violently abusing him as a "lame brat," made him sullen and defiant towards her, while to his nurses (in whom he was fortunate) he clung with an affection that was pathetic.

Of his very early years two facts are recorded that foreshadow later characteristics—a love for natural scenery unusual in one so young, and a precocious affection in his ninth year for a youthful cousin who was a little older than himself. Personal affection, often misguided and run to extremes, was the strongest trait in his character in manhood, and became his greatest danger. It may well be that, had he not been so starved of it in his boyhood, he would not have had so much to repent on its account in after years.

In 1798 he became Lord Byron, the grand-uncle having died, and his mother took him south to see Newstead Abbey, his ancestral seat—a house desolate

and half in ruins owing to the life led by the former peer. To live there, in their impoverished condition, was impossible; indeed matters would have gone ill with them had not his mother's friends succeeded in securing her a pension from the Civil List. The boy was sent to school at Dulwich, while his mother lived in London.

Two years later he was sent to Harrow, where his mother was induced to interfere less with him than she had done when he was at Dulwich, in consequence of which he at last began to gain some benefit from a wholesome discipline. Dr. Drury, the head master, was fortunately a man of sense and tact. "I soon found," he says, "that a wild mountain colt had been submitted to my management. But there was mind in his eye. . . . His manner and temper soon convinced me that he might be led by a silken string to a point, rather than by a cable—on that principle I acted." That his judgment was true and his method wise is shown by what Byron in after years wrote of him. "He was," he says, "the best, the kindest friend I ever had; and I look on him still as a father, whose warnings I have remembered but too well, though too late, when I have erred, and whose counsel I have but followed when I have done well or wisely."

Byron's school days at Harrow were stormy, but not altogether unhappy. At first he had much to contend with. His lameness was an obvious disadvantage, but his spirit enabled him to overcome it to a great extent; and in more than one fight he was victorious, thanks to his powerful arms. He made good use of these in chivalrous defence of smaller boys from the bullies that persecuted them; and it is recorded that one of the cleverest boys in the school

used to write Byron's exercises for him in return for having his battles fought. He was shy and awkward in manner, and conceited both of his powers and his rank. This youthful affectation, however, passed off ; for in after life, while a genuine reverence for rank and its obligations was deep-rooted in him, he showed little, if anything, of the mental attitude of the snob. There was something delightfully *naïf* in his begging a truculent big boy at Harrow not to thrash Lord Delawarr, on the ground of his being "a brother peer".

He was not in any way precocious in his school work ; indeed, he was as ready as any other boy to neglect it in favour of any fun that was going ; but he read a good deal—a great deal, according to his own account—in a miscellaneous way. His affectionate disposition showed itself in the vehemence with which he entered into the romantic school friendships common with imaginative boys. "My school friendships," he says in his journals, "were with me passions, for I was always violent ;" and when he was fifteen he had an attack of calf-love that caused him the most genuine distress, owing to the failure of the object of his love (who was two years his senior) to realise him as anything more than a bashful schoolboy.

His holidays were spent, all unwillingly, with his mother, who had now settled in a small town near Newstead. ... So bitterly did he resent her ungovernable temper, and she his not unnatural sullenness of demeanour towards her, that matters reached such a point (as the story goes) that each went separately to the chemist's on the same evening and begged him not to sell poison to the other should he be asked to do so !

The latter part of his school days, when his energy

of spirit and masterful mind had won him a position of some importance in the eyes of the other boys, was happy, though somewhat turbulent, and it was with considerable reluctance that he left Harrow for Cambridge in 1805. He had wished to go to Oxford, where the range of studies was less confined than at the sister university ; and his impatience led him to be at little pains to propitiate the Cambridge authorities, with whom he was at perpetual loggerheads during his three years of residence. Amongst other devices for exasperating them, he arrived at Trinity College on one occasion accompanied by a tame bear, which, on being remonstrated with, he declared should sit for a fellowship. He became expert at boxing, fencing, swimming and shooting, in spite of his lameness, and indulged freely in every folly that his outbursts of animal spirits suggested.

He seems, indeed, to have defiantly exaggerated his love of wild escapades ; for side by side with this his poetic impulses were growing. In 1807 he privately printed some early efforts, and, a few months later, another small volume of verses called *Hours of Idleness*. In the same year one of his Cambridge letters to a friend says : "We have several parties here, and this evening a large assortment of jockeys, gamblers, boxers, authors, parsons and poets sup with me, a precious mixture, but they go on well together ; and for me, I am a spice of everything except a jockey". His intimate friends lamented his dangerous self-abandonment, but at the same time admitted that his weaknesses were those that came from an affectionate nature that had never been properly disciplined. "He had failings, many failings certainly," his friend Lord Broughton said of him, "but he was untainted with

the baser vices; and his virtues, his good qualities, were all of a high order." However one may, throughout all Byron's life, be inclined to censure his many amours, it must be admitted that they were never entered upon without his affections being genuinely engaged. His amatory impulses were never controlled; but, as he with some justice maintained, they never descended to baseness. Even his later escapades abroad, if they are to be fairly judged, must be judged with reference to the conditions of life and the standard of morality that obtained there and elsewhere with regard to such matters.

Taking the honorary "nobleman's degree" to which he was entitled at Cambridge, he retired in 1809 for a short time to Newstead, where he scandalised the neighbourhood with his entertainment of some boon companions. In the same year he took his seat in the House of Lords.

When *Hours of Idleness* appeared, it had been greeted with a violent, and not altogether unjustifiable, attack in the *Edinburgh Review*. This stung Byron's sensitive nature into fury, and he is said "after reading the review to have looked like a man about to send a challenge". In the two years that followed he matured a satire, modelled on the style of Pope and intended to scarify his detractors. It appeared in 1809, at first anonymously, under the title of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. Jeffrey and Brougham the reviewers, Moore, Campbell, Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, even Sir Walter Scott, all came in for their share of vituperation, and such was the vigour of the satire that it enjoyed a considerable vogue for a time. In after years Byron confessed to penitence for this "evil work of his nonage," and, in particular, begged Scott to forgive what was

written when he was "very young and very angry, and fully bent on displaying his wrath and his wit".

In July 1809 he started, with a friend and three servants, to make the "grand tour" on the Continent. This occupied two years. Wherever he went—Spain, Malta, Turkey, Greece—he found or sought adventures, and, what was more important, gained impressions from which he was quick to extract material for poetic romance. Almost every experience of his travels was turned into verse. Two cantos of *Childe Harold* and several shorter poems were finished before he returned. He had little inclination to come back to England. His debts were so heavy that his lawyers were insisting that Newstead must be sold; and, if this were to be so, Byron declared that there was nothing to tempt him to abandon the beauty of scene and happiness of life he found abroad. "I am sick and sorry," he wrote from sea, on his voyage home, "and when I have a little repaired my irreparable affairs, away I shall march, either to campaign in Spain, or back again to the East, where I can at least have cloudless skies and a cessation from impertinence. I am sick of fops and poesy and prate. . . . Howbeit, I have written some 4,000 lines, of one kind and another, on my travels."

Of this verse he proposed only to publish a mildly satirical poem entitled *Hints from Horace*, of which he thought more highly than it deserved. The success of his previous satire would inevitably incline a young and clever writer to endeavour to repeat it; and it is not so surprising as it at first sight seems that Byron should prefer the *Hints from Horace* to the two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* which he had completed. The latter he alluded to, in answer to his publisher's inquiry as to whether he had any more poetry finished,

as "a lot of Spenserian stanzas, not worth troubling you with". The publisher, however, was astute enough to recognise the power and novelty of style in the poem, and the effect that its eloquent descriptions, its mixture of wit and sentiment, and its flavour of autobiography would have upon a public with whom hero-worship was a fashion. And so, at the end of February, 1813, *Childe Harold* appeared, and Byron "awoke one morning to find himself famous". The sensation the poem caused was extraordinary. Seven editions were called for in four weeks. Its author's name was on every one's tongue, and his society courted by the fairest women and the most influential men of the town.

Such a triumph, and one attained with so little effort, would have turned the heads of most men of five and twenty. Byron, however, was in some degree forearmed by his ingrained aristocracy of mind, which led him to accept the adulation of the public with something of the same spirit that prompted him to refuse to take money for his poems—a proceeding which in his hot youth he despised as equivalent to trading, though in later years none drove a better bargain with a publisher.

His easy success in the romantic vein drove satire from its throne in his mind, and he plunged delightedly into the task of producing one verse romance after another with bewildering rapidity. *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos* appeared in the same year as *Childe Harold*, *The Corsair* and *Lara* in the following year. Each new poem seemed as brilliant as the last. Byron's fluency was untiring, and his command of pretty sentiment and fiery romance equally inexhaustible. That so much of what he wrote at this period has enjoyed more than an ephemeral fame is due to qualities in it that were higher than its author realised. He avowedly

wrote to catch the fancy of the moment. "*Lara*," he says, "I wrote while undressing after coming home from balls and masquerades. . . . *The Bride* was written in four, *The Corsair* in ten days. This I take to be a humiliating confession, as it proves my own want of judgment in publishing, and the public's in reading, things which cannot have stamina for permanence." Nothing shows more clearly how great Byron's natural talents were than the fact that much of this poetry, written with such careless facility, has proved to possess a "stamina for permanence" unsuspected by him.

At the beginning of 1815 Byron married. This, in any case a risky step for one of so ardent and volcanic a temperament, proved to be doubly so when the first transports of affection had worn off. His wife, a daughter of Sir Ralph Milbanke, was a clever and attractive woman, but too precise in character to mate with one of so wayward a disposition as Byron. Her hope of "reforming" him was soon destroyed. Though he was genuinely fond of her—"I do not believe there was ever a brighter, a kinder, or a more amiable and agreeable being," he afterwards wrote—her formality irritated him as much as his irresponsible behaviour shocked and exasperated her; jealousy invaded her affection, and his bantering manner merely inflamed her suspicions. Eventually, after very little more than a year of married life, she left him, ostensibly to go with their infant daughter on a visit to her father, but refused to return and insisted on a separation. Byron was amazed at the news, and to the last maintained that he had never been told her reasons for the step; but, as the mischief was done, there was nothing for him but to acquiesce in her wish. He may not have been altogether sorry to be freed from the hampering presence

of austere and uncompromising virtue; it may be doubted, indeed, if he could have made a good husband to any one.

His lamentable want of reticence with regard to all affairs in which his affections were involved, added to the scandal that naturally resulted from his wife's insistance on a separation, suddenly arrested and turned the tide of his popularity. He had worn his heart too openly upon his sleeve, and so put himself into the power of those who were now as ready to fling abuse at him as they had before been eager to praise him. The storm of vituperation that burst upon him gathered with fierce rapidity. No profligacy was too base to impute to him; and what had in fact been the pursuit of him by women infatuated by his beauty and dazzled by his fame, was set down as deliberate libertinage on his part. Three years later the poet wrote of the occurrences of this time: "Upon what grounds the public formed their opinion, I am not aware; but it was general, and it was decisive. . . . The press was active and scurrilous. I was accused of every monstrous vice by public rumour and private rancour. My name . . . was tainted. I felt that, if what was whispered and muttered and murmured was true, I was unfit for England; if false, England was unfit for me." In April, 1816, he left England, never to return alive.

For the next seven years his life presents the most curious opposites. Freed, by the sale of Newstead, from monetary difficulties, he lived exactly as it pleased him, openly defiant of public opinion and apparently regarding little but his own pleasure. Such a course of life would have deadened the mental activity of most men, but it seemed only to stimulate his; and, so far from its proving enervating, it culminated at the end

of his life in his very practical effort on behalf of Greek independence. Pride of aristocracy gave way to a deep love of freedom, although in personal contact with individual apostles of freedom it was apt instinctively to revive. Moreover, with all the bitterness he felt at the way he had been treated in England by the thousands who had no right to concern themselves with his private affairs, he was at the same time convinced of the injustice of much that he had written in his early satires, and voluntarily suppressed these.

In the first three years of his life abroad he wrote *Manfred*, the final cantos of *Childe Harold*, and the first two of *Don Juan*, besides a number of shorter poems. During these years he had lived through a variety of experiences. He had travelled in Belgium and Germany, and stayed with the Shelleys in Switzerland, where they were joined by Miss Clairmont, with whose love Byron had consoled himself after his breach with his wife. His friendship with Shelley probably had much to do with keeping his literary spirit actively alive. None was less "literary" as a rule than Byron. He hated fine talk or any approach to literary affectation; and while he would converse freely with Shelley, and with him alone, on such matters, he was, even with him, fonder of the boyish talk and boyish escapades that sprang from sheer high spirits. Shelley's delicate nature was the feminine complement to the robustness of Byron's, and the unrestrained confidence between them brought the best out of both when they were together.

For women Byron's affections were never able to be constant. In this he found, perhaps, a too congenial sympathiser in Shelley, part of whose creed it was that to demand constancy in the affections was as irrational

as to demand that a man should never change his opinion. Be that as it may, Byron's love flitted from one to another. Miss Clairmont was forsaken for a succession of mistresses in Italy. At the same time he maintained that he never consciously behaved ill to any woman—nor, according to his lights, did he do so. Miss Clairmont had never asked for anything more than his love; and if Italian husbands were complaisant (as they were to an astonishing extent) he never wronged them without their knowledge, even their connivance, for the *cavalier servente* was an acknowledged feature in the Italian society of the time. For the daughter that was born to him by Miss Clairmont he was full of affectionate solicitude, and the child's death caused him one of the keenest griefs of his life.

With all the irregularity of his conduct, particularly when he settled in Venice, he maintained his love for feats of physical endurance, and practised a spasmodic abstemiousness of living. This last was to a certain extent the result of vanity. From his boyhood he had been inclined to a "full habit," and to counteract this tendency to unwieldiness of body he resorted to violent expedients of regimen, with the result that his personal beauty, to which so many women fell a victim, was unimpaired.

That the combination of indulgence and a too rigorous castigation of the flesh shortened his life is only too probable, but it had no effect on his mental powers. The record of his work during four years (1820 to 1823) is astonishing. The greater part of *Don Juan* (a poem unsurpassed in its kind for beauty of diction, facile and cynical wit, and vigour of episode), *Marino Faliero*, *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari*, *Cain*, *Heaven*

and Earth, *Werner*, all belong to this period, and by no means exhaust the list of what he produced at a time when he lived literally in the midst of "love's alarms".

This was undoubtedly in great measure due to the fact that these years were also marked by the sincerest attachment of his life. In April 1819 he made the acquaintance, in Venice, of the Countess Guiccioli. She, the young wife of a man some forty years her senior, conceived an uncontrollable passion for Byron, who speedily returned it. As Moore (Byron's most intimate confidant) says, this woman, who had till now thought of love but as an amusement, became its slave. Her husband, whose conduct puzzled Byron until he realised that his intention was to get money out of him, after taking her away to Ravenna wrote begging Byron to visit them and so relieve the lamentable condition into which the Countess had fallen. The separation from Byron had resulted in her serious illness, but with his presence she recovered. At last open rupture with her husband became inevitable; and for some years she lived, practically with Byron, but nominally under the protection of her father, whose good graces the poet had won by his enthusiastic participation in the family's revolutionary sentiments.

In spite of its strange circumstances, Byron's life during these years was happier and less marred by mental restlessness than at any other time, and in poetry, as has been seen, it was one of his most prolific periods. The Shelleys were again within hail, having settled on the bay of Spezia, and the small circle of intimates was increased by the addition of Shelley's friend Trelawny, who afterwards shared with Byron and Leigh Hunt the terrible task of burn-

ing Shelley's body on the shore where it had been cast up by the waves after his drowning. Shelley's death was the acutest sorrow of Byron's last years.

A letter of Shelley's, written in August 1821, gives an interesting account of Byron at this time. "He has completely recovered his health, and lives a life totally the reverse of that which he led in Venice. . . . He is now immersed in politics and literature, . . . greatly improved in every respect, in genius, in temper, in moral views, in health and happiness. His connection with La Guiccioli has been an inestimable benefit to him."

The following year Byron wrote : "If I live ten years longer, you will see that it is not all over with me. I don't mean in literature, for that is nothing—and I do not think it was my vocation ; but I shall do something." The outlet for his restlessness and his craving for action was at hand. Through the action of the Greek committee in London, who enlisted his sympathies through a friend of his, he was inspired with a closer interest in the Greek struggle for independence, whose initial success seemed in 1823 to be giving way. Into this cause Byron threw himself heart and soul. His love for liberty and hatred of oppression were genuine. The flippancy of much of his writings, itself a mask on deeper feelings that he would not parade, had not prepared the world for the fervour with which he took up the cause of Greek freedom. At no time in his life does he appear in so fine a light as now. Every other plan was thrown to the winds. Every penny of income that he could extract from England was devoted to this new and imperious claim upon him.

He bought a ship, and in July 1823 sailed from

Genoa with arms and ammunition for the Greeks. Arrived in Greece, he was received with almost royal honours by the "patriots". "I need not tell you," their leader wrote to him, "to what a pitch your presence is desired by everybody, or what a prosperous direction it will give to all our affairs. Your counsels will be listened to like oracles." The Greeks, indeed, were half inclined to ask him to be their king, to unite the various tribes and factions that went to make up their population, and to weld these "hereditary bondsmen" into a free nation. He knew this; and the possibility of such a field of vigorous action, of an acknowledged power that he could use in the cause of freedom, was an additional spur to his enthusiasm. "If they make me the offer," he said to Trelawny, "I shall perhaps not reject it."

He had but a brief taste of authority before death overtook him; but even in the short time he was in Greece he justified the people's confidence in him. He was given a commanding position in the patriot forces, and used it well. All his energies were devoted to healing dissensions among them, and inducing them to carry on the war with prudence and some regard to humanity. He was careless of his own comfort, even of his health, and nature all too soon had her revenge. Only a few months after he landed in Greece he was seized with fever, and died on 19th April, 1824, at Missolonghi, where but a week or two previously he had received special honours as a mark of gratitude for what he had already accomplished.

In Greece he was given the funeral of a prince, and a mourning was proclaimed throughout the nation for the death of their "liberator". At home (for his body was brought to England) he was refused the honour

of a place in Westminster Abbey ; and it was in the main an assemblage of humble folk, recognising him vaguely as a champion of the oppressed, that met to do him honour when he was buried in the village church where his ancestors lay.

XVI.

SHELLEY.

ON 4th August, 1792, Percy Bysshe Shelley was born at Horsham in Sussex. His family was an old one; his grandfather a baronet of some wealth and considerable self-importance, his father a conscientious M.P. and local magnate, and his mother a woman of great beauty. Of the distinguishing characteristics of the poet few seem to have been immediately inherited, except his good looks. His nature had nothing of the niggardliness of his grandfather or the austere regard for "position" that coloured his father's views of life. The very reverse was his case. Born with a temperament of great sensitiveness, he was profoundly influenced by the unrest of thought and belief that surged over Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century. With every inducement, hereditarily, to an "aristocratic" disposition, he was from his youth a staunch upholder of equal rights, a champion of liberty against the oppressor, and an ardent opponent of the conventional. The extremes to which his ideas carried him in these respects were due as much to the vivid sympathy of a poet's nature as to the defiant antagonism of convention, as such, that marks the youth of almost every genius—perhaps, indeed, due even more to his exaggerated reverence for principle.

His deference, in one or two particulars of his life,

Livorno, August 5. 1819

My dear Miss Curran

I ought to have written to you some time ago but my ill spirits & ill health has [illegible] me with an excuse for delaying till tomorrow. I fear that you still continue the exploit of giving [illegible] any apology ——

A thousand thanks for your kind attention to my request I have considered the drawings, & neither of them, nor indeed perhaps any attempt at Sculpture seems to me fit for the purpose. I strongly wish to have an ornamented pyramid of white marble as of the most durable form & the simplest appearance, but if you will persist I will send you my decision upon the base for much good may not to arise on such a subject at the trifle which I gave you — I will send at the same time the inscription. —

Though Spirits still continue wretchedly depressed — more so than a stranger (tho' perhaps I ought not to call you so) could imagine — We have seen no one but the family, who is agreeable. — We think, but as yet only think of returning for the winter —

I have already finished my Canto — which I long to read to you & wish very much to get a good engraving made of the picture in the Colonna Palace, & to have the subject by the Academy. How could one hire & convey such a [illegible] picture home. Indeed I demand for such a work. Now I ask you to add to the amount of so many favours which must be so long accumulated, that of charging yourself with such a [illegible]? —

[illegible] me to you in presenting the Picture, a more [illegible] I can express — long I hope that [illegible] may make some return which it will be [illegible] to find [illegible] for all these trouble —

Let us hear from you health & spirits, & be [illegible] letter.

Most sincerely yours

P. B. Shelley

Tell you be kind enough — Mary says — as to what [illegible] any thing else of simple ornamental form, such as you consider beautiful as well as durable? — I mean to a [illegible] pyramid —

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

Facsimile (reduced) of a Letter to Miss Curran, respecting design for monument to his son William. (Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 22,130, f. 94.)

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to despised "convention," though seemingly an opposition to his avowed convictions, was, as a matter of fact, but an evidence of his sense of right; for this capitulation took place only in cases where a neglect of the world's opinion would inflict wrong, or distress, on those dearest to him. Even here his conduct presented contradictions only to be explained by the conflict between a sense of prudence and the fervent ideas that ran atilt against formality. A determined opponent of the idea of the necessity of marriage as the necessary complement of love, he married, somewhat quixotically; abandoned the married state, with equal conviction, for a union irregular in the eyes of the world; and finally regularised that union for the sake of the woman who won his heart, albeit she had been brought up in a school that regarded such pledges as superfluous. And with it all, his life was pure and self-denying from first to last, and that from principle equally as from inclination.

As a child he was fitfully dreamy and humorous. We hear on the one hand of pranks of mischief in which he indulged, on the other of his fantastic imaginings and his love of the grotesque. When he went to school his gentleness seemed to invite mockery, until persecution of himself, or a hint of the oppression of others, caused him to blaze into a violent resentment. Though gentleness was the keynote of his nature, he was, as Mrs. Shelley says, "passionate in his resistance to an injury, passionate in his love".

At Eton, where he went when he was twelve, he tried to organise a revolt against the system of fagging, seeing in it but an oppression of the young and weak. The attempt met with but little sympathy. The authorities looked upon it as insubordinate; his school-fellows as an unheard-of interference with the natural order of

things. His sensitiveness was set down by the ordinary schoolboy as girlish, and he was not popular.

His mind was too alert for his years ; and though constantly inquiring into knowledge on his own account, he was impatient of his school tasks. His memory was exceptional, and this helped him in his studies in spite of the little time he gave to them. His enthusiastic dabbling in science, his indifference to the school games, his love for solitary rambling, his outbursts of fury when exasperated by taunts, and his reckless attitude towards the authorities, gained him the name of "mad Shelley". Only one of the masters at Eton seems to have understood him. This was one of the oldest of the tutors, a fervent student of chemistry, who won Shelley's heart as much by encouraging his passion for science as by the discerning sympathy with which he won the boy's confidence. Shelley afterwards referred gratefully to his "kindly toleration and purest wisdom".

Shelley loved science as a wonderland, and his love for it went hand in hand with a voracious consumption of romances and sentimental novels, until he began to long for the sweets of authorship. Before he left school he had finished a poem on the subject of the Wandering Jew. No publisher would undertake this, so its undaunted author set to work upon a prose romance, and in the summer of 1810 *Zastrozzi* appeared. Neither in this crude and ridiculous tale, nor in one called *St. Irvyne* which followed it in the autumn of the same year, is there any trace of the future Shelley. The fact that any one could be found to print them, and even pay Shelley for them (he received £40 for *Zastrozzi*), is only to be explained by their appeal to the mawkish sentimentality of a public that could make an idol of

Mrs. Radcliffe. Shelley had scribbled verses when at school, as most clever boys do; but the poet in him was not yet born. For the present he was far more interested in speculative questions, both physical and metaphysical.

Before he went to Oxford in 1810, he had experienced the pains and delights of his first love. A pretty cousin, Harriet Grove, stirred his sympathy by her beauty and the encouraging manner in which she allowed him to dilate to her upon questions that were becoming of serious moment to him—questions of belief and conduct upon which his views were far from orthodox. Their intimacy grew into real affection, at any rate upon Shelley's part. His cousin, however, while attracted by the charm of his personality and the "fearful joy" of sharing his unconventional enthusiasm, became uneasy in mind as her ardent lover sought more and more fervently to proselytise her to his opinions. She took her parents into her confidence, with the result that the engagement, which they had looked upon as assured between them, was forbidden. The crisis came with the abrupt conclusion of Shelley's Oxford career. All communication between them was then put a stop to, and the fair cousin eventually transferred her affections to a wealthy squire.

Soon after matriculating at University College, Shelley made the acquaintance of a fellow-freshman named Hogg; and upon the head of the discovery of mutual tastes and enthusiasms the acquaintance ripened into a close friendship that proved of the greatest moment to Shelley in these years. Hogg was older than he, and as practical as Shelley was the reverse; and although on more than one occasion excitement swept them both off their feet, Hogg soon reached the

ground again and helped Shelley back to his foothold.

Posterity has had reason to be grateful to Hogg for the vivid picture he has left us of Shelley's Oxford days, of their long walks and talks together; their heated discussions on questions of life and morals; the river excursions; the evenings spent amidst the chaos of books and chemical apparatus in Shelley's rooms; the eager discussion of any fresh volume of thought, particularly if it were unorthodox; and the marvellous political theories evolved from their survey of life. Shelley, Hogg says, was an insatiable reader, though not in the prescribed path of studies. "He was to be found, book in hand, at all hours; reading in season and out of season; at table, in bed, and especially during a walk; not only in the quiet country, and in retired paths, but . . . in the most crowded thoroughfares. It is no exaggeration to affirm, that out of the twenty-four hours he frequently read sixteen." His personal appearance "was a sum of many contradictions". He was slight, but strongly built; tall, but stooped so much as to appear short; gentle in movement as a rule, but at times abrupt and awkward; wore good clothes, but took not the slightest care of them; and was absolutely oblivious of the eccentricity of much of his conduct. His face, though its features were not regular, gave the impression of great beauty and a youth much below his years. Hogg also describes it as showing great power, "an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance. Nor was the moral expression less beautiful than the intellectual; for there was a softness, a delicacy, a gentleness, and especially (though this

will surprise many) an air of profound religious veneration."

Hogg says he recognised two principles as regulating the drift of Shelley's opinions at this time—an irrepressible love of liberty in the abstract, and an equally ardent love of toleration of all opinions, more especially of religious opinions. Logic had a fascination for him, and it was an attempt at a pitiless application of logical reasoning to theological questions that proved his undoing, as far as his Oxford career was concerned. His old tutor at Eton had encouraged him to correspond with all kinds of people, friends or strangers, upon topics which engrossed him, and of late philosophical and religious speculation had been the burden of this correspondence. Confronted with the conflict between reason and faith, he rapidly passed from doubt to antagonism, and, under the cloak of candid inquiry, vehemently took up a position of denial of all that was unprovable. The upshot was that his publication of a pamphlet, *The Necessity of Atheism*, in which the arguments against the existence of a Deity were set out in brief, together with a pretended request for their confutation, proved too much for the toleration of the College authorities. Shelley was in any case no favourite with them. They resented the fact that this brilliant mind absolutely refused their control, and they had more than a suspicion that he regarded them with contempt. Confronted with them, he further exasperated them by refusing to answer their questions, and behaved as if he were a prisoner in a court of law instead of a culprit *in statu pupillari*. The result was a decree for his expulsion from the university. His friend Hogg, to whom he had fled in dismay at hearing this sentence, stood generously by

him. He insisted in sharing Shelley's responsibility for the pamphlet, and invited the dons to include him in the sentence of expulsion, which they promptly did.

On 26th March, 1811, the two friends left Oxford together, with a defiant show of exultation which Shelley was very far from feeling. His sensitiveness exaggerated his sense of disgrace, which was intensified upon his father's refusing to receive him at home. Hogg and he settled in lodgings in London, in Poland Street, because the name "reminded Shelley of Thaddeus of Warsaw and of freedom".. Before a month passed Hogg was obliged to leave him, as legal studies at York claimed his attention; so Shelley was left alone, smarting under the double grief of his expulsion and the loss of his Harriet's allegiance. His father made certain advances towards him, in the hope that he would submit to the paternal discipline. This Shelley indignantly refused to do, so his father ceased to supply him with money, and the unfortunate poet was obliged to subsist on such small sums as his mother and sisters could smuggle to him. Fortunately before very long a kind of reconciliation was patched up, and his father made him an allowance.

While his heart was still sore for the loss of his first Harriet, a second crossed his path in the person of Harriet Westbrook, a school-fellow of his sisters and the daughter of a coffee-house keeper in Mount Street. Her name, and a fancied personal resemblance to his earlier love, first attracted Shelley. His quixotic spirit was aroused by her tales of unhappiness at home and tyranny at school; he found, too, a ready pupil to his teaching in this romantic schoolgirl of sixteen who hung upon his words.

He did not realise how surely events were hurrying him to a catastrophe. "Your jokes on Harriet Westbrook amuse me," he wrote to Hogg; "if I know anything about love, I am *not* in love." Nor, indeed, was he, but Harriet imagined herself in love with him. She excited his admiration by her readiness to defy authority, and his chivalry by throwing herself upon his protection. And so we find him writing in his next letter to Hogg that Harriet's father "has persecuted her in a most horrible way, by endeavouring to compel her to return to school. She asked my advice. . . . I advised her to resist. She wrote to say that resistance was useless, but that she would fly with me, and threw herself upon my protection. We shall have £200 a year; when we find it run short we must live, I suppose, upon love! Gratitude and admiration all demand that I should love her *for ever*."

Hogg replied advising matrimony; and, to his surprise, Shelley, the avowed foe of convention, agreed to this. Convictions were not lightly to be set aside, but Shelley was persuaded by Hogg's arguments; and confessed that, while "the ties of love and honour were doubtless of sufficient strength to bind congenial souls," Hogg's contention as to "impracticability," and the unfair sacrifice exacted from the woman, was irrefutable. Shelley's loyal unselfishness led him to give up what was to him a conscientious conviction for the sake of one whose self-abandonment appealed to his honour.

The elopement was arranged, and coach taken from London to York, and thence to Edinburgh, where, on 28th August, 1811, the pair of runaways (whose united ages only amounted to thirty-five) were duly married. It is unlikely that either of them realised all that the step meant. That there was in reality no deep love

on either side is evident both from Shelley's letters to Hogg at the time and by the light of subsequent events. Both were in a state of temporary exaltation ; he from flattered pride and a generous glow of championship, she intoxicated with romantic happiness at her hold upon the nature of this inspired genius. She was, moreover, very pretty and a very enthusiastic disciple, and so for a time all was happiness with the young couple, in spite of chronic impecuniosity.

They did not remain long in Edinburgh, but removed to York to be near Hogg, and, after some months spent in York, to Keswick, where they received hospitable attention at Southey's hands. Their circle by this time had been increased by the addition of Harriet's elder sister, Eliza, who had done much to bring about Harriet's attachment to Shelley, and now sought to resume her former influence over her, even to the extent of interfering between husband and wife. Shelley protested feebly, but fruitlessly, against her intrusion into their happiness ; and before long she seems to have taken the reins of the household management entirely into her hands.

Never so happy as when carrying on a propaganda of some kind in favour of the principles of liberty, Shelley now found an opportunity ready to his hand in the condition of Irish politics. A vague enthusiasm in him for the cause of Catholic emancipation (simply because he considered it a revolt against oppression, and from no religious bias) was brought to a head by the prosecution of an Irish journalist for undue freedom of speech. Shelley composed an *Address to the Irish People*, had a number of copies printed in pamphlet form, and set off with his wife and the inevitable Eliza to Dublin. Harriet Shelley entered as ardently

as he into the project of distributing the *Address*. It was handed about broadcast by every means they could devise, even to the extent of throwing copies out of window to the passers by whenever they saw any one who "looked likely". Harriet, whose enjoyment of the fun of the thing must have jarred somewhat upon Shelley's earnestness, wrote to a friend: "For myself, I am ready to die of laughter when it is done, and Percy looks so grave. Yesterday he put one into the hood of a woman's cloak."

When two months had passed, and no upheaval in the Irish nation resulted from the dissemination of the *Address*, the Shelleys returned disappointedly across the Channel. They made their home for a time in Wales, then in Devonshire, and after that again in Wales. This period proved the most peaceful in Shelley's married life with Harriet. He almost tolerated Eliza's interference in return for her usefulness; he was elated with the poetic impulse which was now beginning to declare itself in him, and his wife became dearer to him owing to the approaching birth of a daughter. After another short visit to Ireland they settled in London, where, in March 1814, they were remarried according to English law, to avoid any difficulties as to the legitimation of their child. A little while before this *Queen Mab* had been published,—privately, on account of its extreme independence of expression on matters of morals and religion.

Hogg gives an amusing description of Shelley's irresponsible habits of life. He walked about in any kind of dress or undress, as frequently as not without a hat. Meals, in the Shelley household, were a matter of chance: the poet, if left to himself, would eat little but bread or buns, and that only when he was hungry, and at no

set times. Hogg relates how he "dropped a word, a hint, about a pudding," but Shelley replied dogmatically that "pudding was a prejudice". As often as not, food that was sent to his room would remain untasted all day, and in the evening he would be asking his wife whether he had dined.

He appeared quite content in this elemental existence, until a want of sympathy began to cast a shadow upon his relations with his wife, who tired of his enthusiasms. She seems also to have cared but little for her child, and to have welcomed the tactless interference of her family between herself and her husband. The estrangement grew, till it was brought to a crisis by a new influence that came upon Shelley's life. Some two years before he had entered into correspondence with William Godwin, as a result of his admiration of Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, and since he had come to live in London he had seen much of the Godwins and their daughter Mary.

Mary Godwin, now a precociously clever girl of sixteen, brought up in complete freedom from any kind of prejudice as to the conduct of life, and familiar with her father's scorn of conventional morality, fell passionately in love with Shelley. It was not long before her love was returned. The tenderness that Shelley had felt for his wife had been killed by her recent attitude to him; she had, in spite of his appeals for a happier understanding between them, left him alone and gone with her sister to Bath; he was lonely, harassed, and craving for sympathy; and it was little wonder that an interest in Mary Godwin, whose temperament and imagination matched his own, grew to a great liking, and from that to a great love. This could not be concealed. Mary Godwin unhesitatingly

put her life and happiness in his hands, and in July 1814 Shelley and she left England together.

It is easier to explain than to excuse Shelley's desertion of his wife, unless it be remembered that to him the fact of marriage meant nothing in itself. Love he considered the only true bond, and when that was gone all bonds were to be considered broken. He had married Harriet merely from prudential reasons, seeing the "impracticability" of an informal union with her, as he had written to Hogg. His principles were untouched by the fact of having gone through the ceremony, and he conscientiously believed that he was now acting rightly in leaving her and devoting his life to what was to him a real marriage with one whom he could sincerely love. At the same time he realised with compunction the difficulty of Harriet's position, and endeavoured, with a pathetic *naïveté*, to induce her to appreciate his dilemma and to discuss the thorny situation in an impartial manner. He even suggested to her, in all good faith, that they should continue friends, and that she should come and live with him and Mary.

It was not without a struggle that he surrendered to the overwhelming force of his new love. "Nothing that I ever read in tale or history," says Lady Shelley, "could present a more striking image of a sudden, violent, irresistible passion than that under which I found him labouring when, at his request, I went up from the country to call on him in London. Between his old feelings towards Harriet, from whom he was not then separated, and his new passion for Mary, he showed in his looks, in his gestures, in his speech, the state of a mind 'suffering, like a little kingdom, the nature of an insurrection'. His eyes were bloodshot, his hair and dress disordered."

Harriet lived for two years after the separation. Having lost Shelley, her desire for him revived, and she seems to have cherished some hope that he might tire of Mary Godwin and return to her. She corresponded occasionally with Shelley, and the birth of a second child shortly after the separation was the cause of their meeting more than once. But Shelley's heart was irrevocably given to Mary Godwin, and the unfortunate Harriet realised this. Eventually, in November 1816, she drowned herself in a fit of despair.

Shelley undoubtedly suffered acutely when he heard the news of her suicide. Though, according to his convictions, he was free from blame in the matter, it was inevitable that he should feel remorse, chiefly, it seems, at his having been the instrument by which her life, which with some other man might have been happy, had been spoiled. An additional grief to him was the refusal of Mr. Westbrook to give up their two children. Shelley's appeals were unheeded, and a Chancery suit only resulted in a decision against him. At the close of the same year (1816) he was married to Mary Godwin in London.

After a short wandering in Switzerland and a winter spent in London, Shelley and Mary settled, early in 1815, in a house near Windsor Forest. Mary's companionship and perfect sympathy drew all the poet in Shelley's nature to the surface, and his first fine poem, *Alastor*, was written among the glades of the forest. The next year, 1816, which was to end for Shelley in the gloom of Harriet's suicide, began with brighter things. Mary bore him a son; and a little later, in the course of a second visit to Switzerland, he made the acquaintance of Byron. The intimacy between the

two poets lasted till Shelley's death ; for Shelley had an enormous admiration for Byron's powers, though distressed and occasionally repelled by his conduct as a man.

After their marriage was legalised the Shelleys took a house at Marlow, where a year of happiness and hard work ended in the breakdown of the poet's health that drove him from England. *The Revolt of Islám* (originally called *Laon and Cythna*) was published in the late autumn of 1817, and several shorter poems planned and written in the same year. *Alastor* had been a panegyric of ideal beauty ; *Laon and Cythna* was an expression of Shelley's aspirations towards freedom and equality. The hero Laon, says Mr. Symonds, is the poet himself idealised, the self which he imagined when he undertook his Irish campaign ; and the poem, to quote Shelley's preface, celebrates Love as " the sole law which should govern the moral world ".

At Marlow Shelley unshrinkingly put into practice his theories of equality and charity. He gave freely to any one who was in want, and made himself ill visiting the sick. He would even go to the length of giving the clothes he was wearing to needy wayfarers, and, rather than let distress pass unrelieved, would return home coatless or bootless, to his wife's dismay. During this time he saw something of literary society, chiefly at Leigh Hunt's house at Hampstead, where he met Keats. After a severe attack of illness in the winter of 1817, it became evident that Shelley's health was in a precarious condition. His extreme susceptibility and excitability, his eccentricities of diet and inadequate care of himself, were wearing out a constitution that had never been too robust. Change of

climate was his only hope, and so, in March, 1818, a start was made for Italy. There the remaining four years of his life were spent, four years into which was crowded all that has made him famous as a poet. The year after he landed in Italy was perhaps the most memorable, for to this belong both *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci*, stupendous achievements both, and yet differing absolutely in character. In 1820 *The Witch of Atlas* was written, as well as some of his most exquisite shorter poems—the *Ode to the West Wind*, *The Cloud*, and the *Ode to a Skylark*; in 1821, the strange rhapsody *Epipsychidion*, which he described to Leigh Hunt as an idealised history of his life and feelings, and the beautiful *Adonais*, inspired by the death of Keats; lastly, in 1822, the lyrical drama, *Hellas*, of which Shelley himself thought little.

Sometimes living by themselves, sometimes with Byron or other friends, the Shelleys led a rather restless life in Italy, frequently changing their home, but spending the greater part of their time in the neighbourhood of Pisa and Leghorn. The poet's health improved surprisingly, and he entered into the delights of his new life with boyish eagerness. It was the desire to emulate Byron in the possession of a yacht that cost him his life. He knew little of sailing, and the "Don Juan" was a frail craft, but Shelley trusted himself to it in the worst of weathers. He was returning on 8th July, 1822, from welcoming Leigh Hunt at Leghorn, when—whether as the result of a storm in which he was overtaken, or, as has been alleged, in consequence of the treachery of some fishermen who ran down his boat imagining that it had the "rich Lord Byron" on board—the "Don Juan" sank, and Shelley and his two companions were drowned.

The poet's body was cast up on the shore at Viareggio ten days afterwards. It was temporarily buried on the shore, but some days later was exhumed by Trelawny, Byron and Leigh Hunt, who cremated it, with such observance of classic rites as they could procure, almost upon the spot where the sea had thrown it up. The ashes were afterwards taken by Trelawny to Rome and buried in the Protestant cemetery there, hard by where Keats already lay.

If it were ever true of a poet that he wrote for posterity, it is so of Shelley. For various reasons—chief, perhaps, among them his too conscientious insistence on his convictions—his poems met with but little recognition in his lifetime. He stands at the beginning of a new era in English poetry, and is the embodiment of a new force whose effect we cannot yet fully gauge. His work was pervaded by a sincerity that was still a new feature in poetry; it was pregnant with thought vastly different from, and infinitely deeper than, the superficial philosophy of Wordsworth or Byron; he was unsurpassed, before or since, in his realisation of the beauty of nature and in his absolute harmony with her; and the sheer lyrical beauty of his finest verse has never been equalled. There is no sadder tragedy in the history of literature than his sudden end—a genius of matchless beauty and infinite possibilities cut off at the moment when it seemed ripening to the fullest of its powers.

XVII.

KEATS.

IN the boyhood of Keats nothing seemed less likely than that he would become a poet. The son of a hard-working, self-respecting ostler, who had married his employer's daughter and become a prosperous stable-keeper, he bade fair to inherit an honest common sense, but no particular delicacy of imagination; and as a schoolboy his cheerful pugnacity appeared to mark him for a soldier's career. The only traits of character that he can be said to have derived directly from his parents are the manly independence that was his father's, and love of pleasure (an "exquisite sense of the luxurious" Keats afterwards called it) that was his mother's. The latter tendency he kept under stern control when he discovered its force. Its existence in his mother probably had an effect upon his life, for it is said to have been some imprudence of hers that hastened his premature birth, with the delicate constitution of a seven months' child, on 31st October, 1795.

The resulting delicacy did not declare itself until he had come to manhood, and then only when he had overtaxed his constitution; but it was there, and probably accounts for the touch of morbidity that eventually came out in his character, as well as for the extreme

staying a short time with Mrs Brawne who lives in the House which was Mr Dilke's. I am excessively nervous. a person I am not quite used to entering the room half chokes me. 'Tis not yet Consumption I believe, but it would be were I to remain in this climate all the Winter. so I am thinking of either voyaging or travelling to Italy. Yesterday I received an invitation. from Mr Shelley, a Gentleman residing at Pisa, to spend the Winter with him if I go I must be away in a Month or even less. I am glad you like the Poems

your must hope with me it time and health will produce you some more. This is the first morning I have been able to sit to the paper and have many Letters to write if I can manage them. God bless you my dear Sister.

Your affectionate Brother

John.

[*Note.*—There is an imperfection in the MS. at the end of lines 1 and 2 of this page: the words mutilated are "th[at]" and "pro[duce]".

JOHN KEATS.

Facsimile (slightly reduced) from a Letter to Sister Fanny. (Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 34,019, f. 81.)

(*Face Page 218*

sensitiveness to external circumstances that marked him after the exuberance of boyhood had worn off.

The self-tormenting disposition that caused him so much misery when, towards the end of his short life, he fell in love, was in him even as a schoolboy. His brother George (two years his senior) was his only confidant in this respect. To their other schoolfellows John Keats appeared a bright, loveable boy, full of fun, neither particularly clever nor particularly stupid, hot-tempered, and always eager for a fight. George Keats says that John never "teased any other of the boys with his miseries" except him and their younger brother Tom; but that he used nevertheless to have fits of unreasonable depression that it required all their good humour to rout. Constitutional delicacy was probably at the bottom of this; for the major part of his character, at all events till disease had laid its inexorable hand on him, was manly. He was never at bottom the "sensuous weakling" imagined by those who did not know him. His disposition was by no means lacking in determination, and he took a very sane view of his powers, judging his own work with considerable discrimination and independence. Matthew Arnold is right in saying that Keats undoubtedly had in him the elements of high character and the effort to develop them, but that the effort was frustrated and cut short by misfortune, disease and time.

The three brothers were sent to an excellent school at Enfield, kept by the Rev. John Clarke, whose son, Charles Cowden Clarke, became one of Keats' closest and most valuable friends. Both his parents died while Keats was still at school. His father was killed by a fall from his horse early in 1804; and his mother (who, twelve months after she became a widow, married

a man from whom she almost immediately separated) died of consumption in February 1810. Keats had been passionately devoted to his mother, who idolised him ; and his inconsolable grief at her death was the first sign he had given to any at school, save his brothers, of his sensibility. He hid himself for several days, we are told, " in a long agony of grief, and would take no consolation from master or from friend ".

In the last year of his school life he suddenly developed an ambition to succeed. He carried off all the prizes in literature, and became so ardent a reader that he had to be forced into the playground. Besides such obvious food for a boyish imagination as *Robinson Crusoe* or *The Incas of Peru*, he greedily absorbed all he could find that dealt with the old mythologies, storing his mind with material that was afterwards to prove of rich use to him.

At his mother's death he passed, with his brothers, under the guardianship of a certain Mr. Abbey, a merchant living at Walthamstow. At his direction the future poet was withdrawn from school in 1810, and apprenticed to a surgeon at Edmonton. Whether he relished the new course of his studies is doubtful. He was at least glad that the short distance at which his new home lay from Enfield enabled him to keep up his friendship with Cowden Clarke and his former master. Both took a very kindly interest in him and kept him supplied with books. The loan of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, some two years after he went to Edmonton, turned the balance of his inclinations from surgery —if, indeed, they ever tended that way—to poetry. The new world of fantasy opened out by Spenser's verses enchanted him. " He ramped through the scenes of the romance," says Cowden Clarke, " like a young

horse turned into a spring meadow. And, most important of all, he woke suddenly to a sense of poetic expression. Spenser's imagery, the felicities of verbal description and the realisation of its possibilities, possessed him with a desire to write poetry as well as read it ; and he achieved a very fair Sonnet on Spenser, some lines of which—

> It is impossible to 'scape from toil
> O' the sudden, and receive thy spiriting :
> The flower must drink the nature of the soil
> Before it can put forth its blossoming :

—show both his determination to try to attempt poetry and his sense of the education his powers needed before he could succeed.

He did not immediately abandon the medical career ; but it was probably this upheaval in his ideas that caused dissension between him and the surgeon to whom he was bound. He left Edmonton before his apprenticeship was fully served, and went to London to walk the hospitals. He worked there to some purpose, for he was appointed dresser at Guy's Hospital in March, 1816, and a month or two later passed his examinations as Licentiate of Apothecaries' Hall. Within a year after this, however, he had finally abandoned medicine for poetry.

In London (where he lived with his brothers, who were clerks in Mr. Abbey's office) Keats was able, through Cowden Clarke's friendly offices, to make some literary acquaintances. He was admitted into a coterie of writers and artists that frequented Leigh Hunt's house in Hampstead. There he met Hazlitt, Shelley, Godwin, Haydon the painter, and a number of other sympathetic spirits. Leigh Hunt's encouragement stimulated him to persevere in his poetic attempts,

and before long he had the pleasure of seeing sonnets of his printed in Hunt's paper, the *Examiner*.

A less discreet encouragement on the part of his new friends resulted in the publication of his first book of *Poems*, in 1817. There is little of real worth in it, little even to presage what was to come from his pen; nor did it attract any attention. Keats said of it: "It was read by some dozen of my friends, who liked it; and some dozen whom I was unacquainted with, who did not". Its importance, however, lies in its constituting a landmark in his life. Its publication meant that surgery was done with for ever, and that Keats was to be a poet.

Endymion was begun early in 1817, soon after the *Poems* were published. Keats set to work upon it with the deliberate intention of producing something that should prove whether he were entitled to the name of "poet" or no. He flitted from place to place as he worked—Carisbrooke, Margate, Oxford, Dorking—and, having finished his first draft of the poem, spent the winter at Hampstead with his younger brother.

Keats was under no delusions as to his powers. He had the highest idea of poetical fame, and consequently a distrust of his worthiness to aspire to it; but at the same time he had a quiet confidence in his ability to make the attempt. Writing, to a friend, of his feelings in this respect he says: "I have no right to talk until *Endymion* is finished. It will be a test, a trial of my powers of imagination. . . . And when I consider that this is a great task, and that when done it will take me but a dozen paces towards the Temple of Fame, it makes me say—'God forbid that I should be without such a task'."

Endymion was published in April 1818, while he was

with his brothers in Devonshire. Its appearance was at first almost unheeded by the reviewers ; the violent attacks that defaced the pages of the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood* did not appear until two or three months later. Meanwhile Keats started off with Charles Armitage Brown (a neighbour who had become an intimate friend) for a pedestrian tour in the Lake district. Just before they started, Keats' elder brother George had emigrated, with a newly-wed wife, to America ; and, much as the poet approved of the step —for he considered it a manlier prospect than a clerk's desk—he felt the separation keenly. George had shared his hopes and fears more intimately than any one, and the loss of such a confidant was no slight matter, apart from brotherly affection.

The pedestrian tour was extended into a journey through Ayrshire and the Western Highlands, and a visit to Belfast. Keats' letters, written as he travelled, show that he had considerable enjoyment from his new experiences, and even more from Brown's society. Unfortunately, over-exertion and too frequent exposure to weather gave a fatal opportunity to the inherited weakness of his constitution. He was attacked by an affection of the throat which became so persistent as to make him ill and depressed, and, to add to his trouble, news reached him of the serious illness of his brother Tom, who had been living at Hampstead while he was away. Hurrying back to England in August, he found his brother in a hopeless condition. Four months of bitter anxiety and devoted attention ended in Tom's death at the beginning of December.

In the midst of this distress of mind and body, Keats' pride and sense of justice were outraged by the malicious attacks made upon him by a certain group of reviewers.

Endymion was by no means a perfect poem, and none realised that better than its author ; but it was far from deserving the insulting ridicule with which it was received by the reviewers of *Blackwood* and the *Quarterly*. Fortunately, grieved as he was, Keats had strength of mind sufficient to see that personal spite had more to do with these venomous attacks than any judgment, and that utterances such as these could have little ultimate effect upon his position as a poet. The Leigh Hunt "circle" was the object of special dislike on the part of a section of the critics, and poor Keats had to bear his share of the vituperation with which these emphasised their dislike whenever opportunity offered.

At the same time the present sting was keen. "I have been at different times turning it in my head whether I should go to Edinburgh and study for a physician," he wrote to his brother George ; "it is not worse than writing poems, and hanging them up to be fly-blown in the *Review* shambles." But a little later he had recovered his self-control, and wrote : "Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic of his own works. My own domestic criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* could possibly inflict." Again, to another friend : "I will assay to reach to as high a summit in poetry as the nerve bestowed upon me will suffer. The faint conceptions I have of poems to come bring the blood frequently into my forehead. . . . I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the beautiful, even if my night's labours should be burnt every morning and no eye ever shine upon them."

Now alone in the world, Keats gratefully agreed to

Brown's suggestion that he should live with him, and the two friends settled together at Hampstead. Keats' appearance at this time is described by Leigh Hunt as giving the impression of mingled energy and sensibility, "an eager power checked and made impatient by ill-health". His face had more the shape of a woman's than a man's, wide over the forehead and small at the chin. His eyes were large, dark and sensitive; his mouth full, and less intellectual than his other features; his auburn hair was worn divided in the centre, falling in rich masses on each side of his face. All the accounts of him mention the intensity of expression in his eyes; "as if he had been looking on some glorious sight," says one. Joseph Severn, the friend of Keats' last days, said he could never forget "the wine-like lustre of Keats' eyes, just like those of certain birds that habitually front the sun".

His happiness in Brown's companionship gave Keats fresh courage with regard to his poetry, and the year 1819 saw the birth of the best of his work. *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil*, had been finished in the previous year; but to 1819 belong *The Eve of St. Agnes*, *Lamia*, *Hyperion*, *The Eve of St. Mark*, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, and a number of shorter poems. In the same year, too, Brown and he collaborated in a tragedy, *Otho the Great*. Keats had an ambition "to make as great a revolution in modern dramatic writing as Kean has done in acting," and Kean was not indisposed, as it turned out, to produce the tragedy, but various obstacles and delays prevented its ever being performed. It was due to Brown's care that a number of Keats' poems were saved from untimely destruction, for the poet was singularly careless of what became of them after they were written, as if the actual pleasure of

unburdening his soul in verse was all he desired. The *Ode to a Nightingale* was rescued in this manner, by Brown's observing that Keats, on coming into the house after sitting for some hours on the lawn, was stuffing some fragments of paper behind his books. These were put together and rearranged with some difficulty, and proved to contain the stanzas of the beautiful *Ode*.

In the same eventful year a new influence came into Keats' life. The adjoining house at Hampstead was occupied by a well-to-do widow, Mrs. Brawne, and her two daughters. The elder of these, Fanny, was a girl of some beauty and intelligence and a plentiful fund of spirits. Despite his affection for his friend Brown, Keats' heart was empty, and his nature was one that craved for love. Fanny Brawne's attractions at first amused, then irritated, and finally fascinated him, and in a few months he found himself passionately in love. He had written to his brother, on his first acquaintance with the Brawnes, that Fanny was "ignorant, monstrous in her behaviour, flying out in all directions"; that he classed her as a "minx," and was "tired of such style as hers and would decline any more of it". Yet three or four months later he was her acknowledged lover. The explanation of this contradiction seems to be that Keats tormented himself with apprehension at the thought of the approach of love. He preserved his boyish ideal of the nobility of good women, and dreaded possible disillusionment. Indeed, as he confessed to one of his friends, he had become so possessed with his ideals that he formed expectations that were unreasonable, with the natural consequence of unhappy disappointment.

Now, however, love swept away all cold reasoning with the flood of its passion. "The very first week I

knew you I wrote myself your vassal," he says in one of his love-letters to Fanny. But with this new passion came a new source of distress. A long engagement appeared inevitable. Mrs. Brawne, though she did not forbid it, could not be expected to encourage her daughter's marriage with a man of such small means and so uncertain a future; and Keats would never have consented to live on her support. The prospect of the longed-for marriage receded into a dim future, and he sank into a morbidly sensitive state in which he tortured himself by avoiding the object of his love, on the plea that to see her (and so know happiness for a moment) would be only to add fuel to the consuming fire of his hopelessness. In September 1819 he wrote to Fanny: "I love you too much to venture to Hampstead; I feel it is not paying a visit but venturing into a fire. . . . Knowing well that my life must be passed in fatigue and trouble, I have been endeavouring to wean myself from you. . . . I am a coward; I cannot bear the pain of being happy; 'tis out of the question. I must admit no thought of it."

The climax of his wretchedness was reached when, early in 1820—barely a year after he had declared his love for Fanny—his health gave way completely. A severe chill prostrated him, and the lurking enemy of consumption found his depressed constitution an easy prey. His grief for his brother's death, the gibes of the reviewers, and the new agony of his hopeless love had between them brought him into a condition which left him little power of resistance. In spite of this he rallied manfully for a while, combating his tangible ills much more successfully than those born of his sensitiveness of mind. "Imaginary grievances have always been more my torment than real ones," he

wrote to Brown; "our imaginary woes are conjured up by our passions, and are fostered by passionate feeling."

In May of this year he was obliged to part from Brown, who was going to Scotland. The strain this put upon Keats' feelings, and his discomfort in his loneliness, made him worse again in health; and it became evident that his only chance of recovery, if not of life, lay in escape from the English climate. He was very ill when, in July, the volume entitled *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and other Poems*, was published. Mercifully for him, the critics were in this instance more just and less spiteful; and a favourable notice of his poetry in the *Edinburgh Review* marked the turn of the tide of critical opinion, which, after his death, was all in his favour. He was able to write in September to Brown that the book had been "very highly rated," though its sale was slow.

Leigh Hunt, alarmed at his condition, had taken him to his house, and from there Keats wrote a despairing letter to Fanny Brawne. "I wish I could invent some means to make me at all happy without you," it says; "I do not think my health will improve much while I am separated from you. For all this, I am averse to seeing you: I cannot bear flashes of light, and return to my glooms again." It ends: "I wish I was either in your arms full of faith, or that a thunderbolt would strike me. God bless you."

In spite of this, the fear of a misunderstanding owing to an undelivered letter drove him to Hampstead, notwithstanding Hunt's entreaties; and for the last month of his life in England he enjoyed the sad comfort of living in the Brawnes' house, tended by Fanny, whose attachment to him was very sincere.

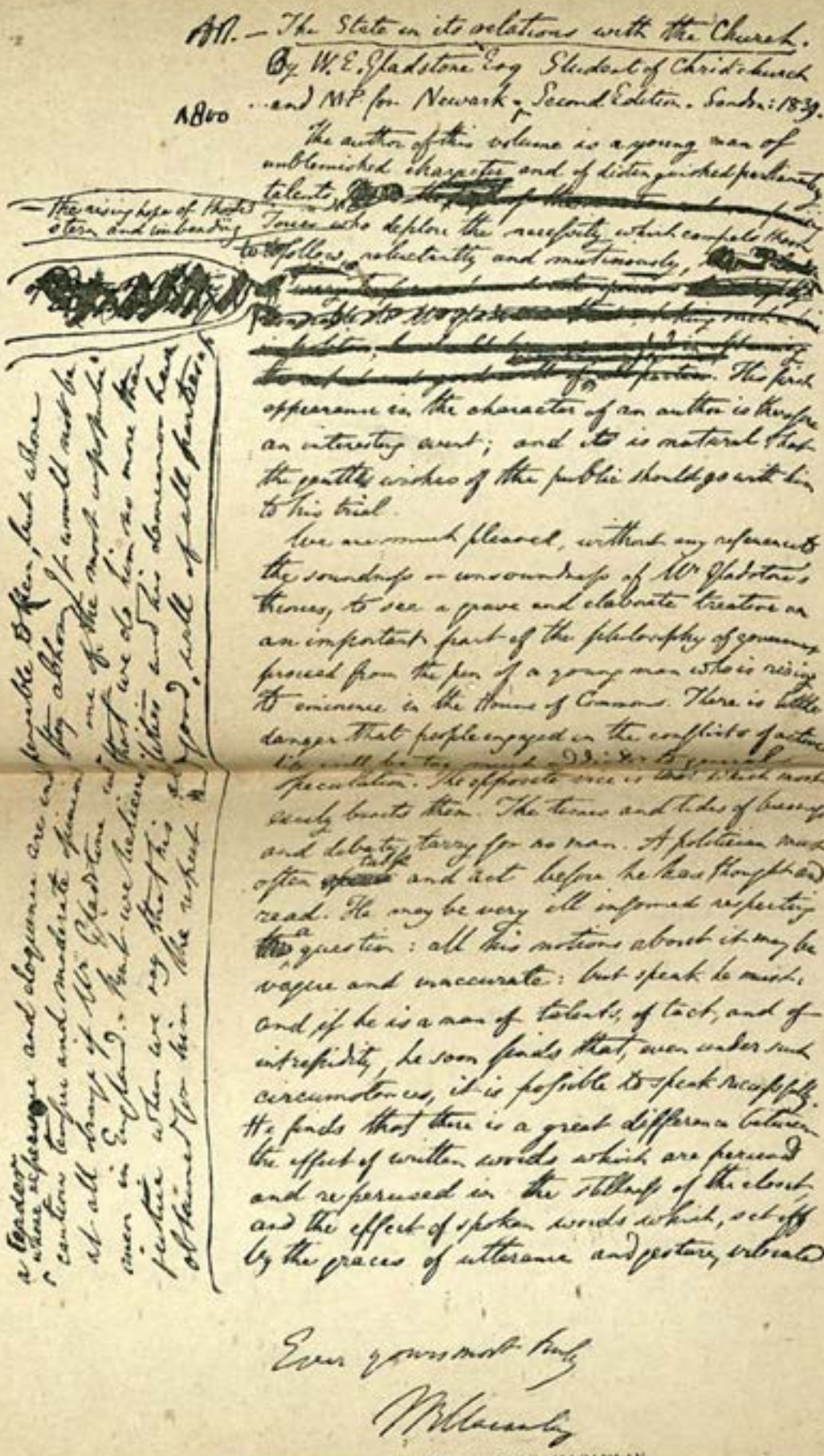
At last, in September, he set sail for Italy, accompanied by Joseph Severn, a young artist whose acquaintance he had made some years before. Severn had gained the Academy gold medal, which provided for a three years' course of study in Italy ; and he undertook, with rare unselfishness, to take Keats to Italy with him. Such scanty happiness as the poet knew during the last months of his life was due alone to Severn's unceasing devotion and care. He rallied for a little while after they reached Rome, but before the end of the year it was evident that he was in a hopeless condition. In November he wrote to Brown that he felt "as if his real life were past and he were leading a posthumous existence".

The new year found him weaker and more suffering, praying for death to release him. At last, on 23rd February, the release came. He died in Severn's arms, thanking God for the end of his misery. "Severn—lift me up," he said, "I am dying—I shall die easy ; don't be frightened, be firm, and thank God it has come." Barely twenty-six, he died almost before his manhood could assert itself, but not before his powers had shown that, had he lived, they would have raised him to the foremost rank among English poets.

XVIII.

MACAULAY.

THE story of Macaulay's life is no record of romantic struggle, or of a character formed in the hard school of experience. He never knew adversity, and scarcely ever unhappiness, and by the time he was five-and-twenty he was a literary celebrity and in a fair way to become a social "lion". For all this, he was far from wanting in individual character. Born of Scottish Presbyterian stock on his father's side, and Quaker on his mother's, he inherited the seeds of an independent and upright nature; and in after life neither literary nor political successes spoilt him, or were able to turn him from the course of conduct which his conscience sanctioned. In his political career he more than once refused office, at a time when the salary was a consideration to him, rather than make concessions which seemed to him a departure from integrity; in his literary life, though his writings brought him great wealth, and his popularity was such that he might have found endless opportunities of trading upon it, he never departed from scrupulous obedience to a piece of advice his mother had given him when he was a schoolboy: "Spare no time or trouble, and render each piece as perfect as you can, and then leave the event without one anxious thought".



THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY, LORD MACAULAY.

Facsimile (reduced) from an Article for *The Edinburgh Review* criticising Gladstone's *The State in its Relations with the Church*. (Detached signature from a Letter to Prof. M. Napier, Editor of the *Review*.)
(Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 34,629, f. 1, and 34,630, f. 83.)

[Face page 230.

And, withal, he was no austere paragon. Of quick sympathies, warmly affectionate, and a determined lover of fun, he brightened any society that was so fortunate as to include him; and never did he appear more attractive than in his home circle, where his coming was looked for with eager delight by his brothers and sisters and a proud joy by his parents.

He was born in Leicestershire, at Rothley Temple, on 25th October, 1800. His father, Zachary Macaulay, had been Governor of Sierra Leone, and was now Secretary to its Chartered Company; a man of severely pious character, reserved in manner, patiently devoting his life and all his energies to one end—the cause of the emancipation of slaves. There was never any very close sympathy between him and his son, though to the end the latter preserved a touching deference to his father's opinion and anxiety for his approval of all he did. Mrs. Macaulay was a mother such as every man would wish; as wise as she was affectionate, devoted to her children without foolishly indulging them, their resource in every trouble, and looked upon by them with the fearless happiness of a real companionship.

After a childhood in which he gave evidence of precocious gifts (though his parents were wise enough never to let him imagine that this was so), Macaulay was sent to an excellent school near Cambridge, whence he afterwards went to the university. He was an insatiable reader, and his schoolmaster allowed him to browse at will amongst his books. The boy had a prodigious memory, and stored his mind with fact and fancy. Before he was eight he had written a verse romance in the style of Scott, and compiled a *Compendium of Universal History* from the Creation to

the year of his birth! Even before this, when he had barely learned to write, he produced verses, stories and hymns which Hannah More pronounced "quite extraordinary for such a baby".

At school he was very diligent and rather homesick; at Cambridge (where he matriculated in 1818) he was happier, and less diligent as far as the academic course of studies was concerned. He had absolutely no taste for mathematics, which played so large a part at Cambridge. "Oh! for words to express my abomination of that science," he wrote to his mother; "oh! that I had to learn astrology, demonology, or school divinity! . . . Oh! to change Cam for Isis!" With his unmistakeable literary proclivities, the Oxford reading would have been far more to his taste than the formal sciences in favour at Cambridge. Probably his father's austere religious principle looked askance at the imagined freedom of thought at Oxford.

Macaulay did not fail, however, to make his mark at the university. He gained more than one classical prize, and twice won the Chancellor's Medal for English Verse; and though his attempt for "honours" in his final examinations was unsuccessful—as was inevitable with his hatred for mathematics—he succeeded eventually in gaining a fellowship at Trinity College. Besides this, he revelled in the interchange of political opinion with the many friends he made at the university. For a great part of his life politics ranked equally with literature in his affections; and, thanks to the clear-sighted teaching of his father, he from the first took up a reasonable position that no political fever was able to disturb. There was no more ardent advocate of reform than he, but none farther from the attitude of the mere revolutionary. The rhetorical spirit was very

strong in him, and he found congenial opportunity for exercising it in the Union Debating Society at Cambridge.

Before he was appointed to his fellowship he had already made some literary success with contributions (mainly, to his father's undisguised chagrin, of a romantic nature) to *Knight's Quarterly Magazine*. His father was so entirely absorbed in philanthropical questions, and his ideas so strictly bounded by his religious outlook, that he viewed what he considered the "worldly" tendency of his son's writings with a disfavour that few young men would have received with the loving patience that Macaulay displayed. The latter's attitude to his father was throughout beautiful in its eagerness to avoid offence, and its tender reverence for the stern old man's scruples.

A severer call was soon made upon his filial devotion by the fact that his father's means were rapidly diminishing. Absorption in public affairs had meant a neglect of private interests, and the family's prosperous circumstances were unmistakeably declining to a point not far from ruin. Nothing in his life does Macaulay greater honour than the manner in which he courageously set himself to right his father's fortunes, and this, not only cheerfully, but almost without the sense of its being any sacrifice on his part. For many years to come he looked upon the prosperous fortune, that he was able to make his own, merely as a trust for his family's sake. He absolutely disregarded whatever may have been his own inclinations as to the shaping of his life, and devoted all his energies to the comfort of those dear to him, with a nobility that was heightened by the whole-hearted happiness with which he set about the task.

He was called to the Bar, but never made any serious attempt to practise. His two loves, politics and literature, claimed his mind. It was but a little while after he had attracted attention by a brilliant speech at a public meeting on the Slavery question, that he received the signal honour of an invitation to write for the *Edinburgh Review*, a journal then at the height of its influence. The mere fact of the invitation was sufficient to rank him as a writer of high merit, but his response to it exceeded all expectations.

The *Essay on Milton* was to him what *Childe Harold* was to Byron. With this, and his public speeches, he became famous in a moment. His society was courted by the cleverest circles in London, for he was as brilliant a conversationalist as a writer; and political leaders vied with one another in praising him. He was appointed a Commissioner of Bankruptcy by Lord Lyndhurst in 1828; and when, four years later, a change of ministry abolished the post, Lord Lansdowne offered him a seat in Parliament for the "pocket borough" of Calne, on no more intimate grounds than his admiration for the articles with which Macaulay had followed up his first success in the *Edinburgh Review*.

It may not be amiss to quote an account, given by one who knew him, of the impression given by Macaulay's personal appearance about this time: "A short manly figure, marvellously upright, with a bad neckcloth, and one hand in his waistcoat pocket. Of regular beauty he had little to boast; but in faces where there is an expression of great power, or of great good humour, or both, you do not regret its absence." Macaulay was notorious for the carelessness with which he wore his clothes, though the clothes themselves were good and carefully chosen, till his later years, when he

developed a fondness for embroidered waistcoats of surprising design.

His first speech in Parliament, on the Reform Bill, made a deep impression, and was the beginning of four years' political industry of the busiest kind. His abilities were not such as could be allowed to waste themselves on mere debating, and before long a post was found for him as Commissioner of the Board of Control, where Indian affairs came more specially under his attention. All this time he continued to write for the *Edinburgh*, but with the less pleasure as he more and more realised the necessity of doing it to add to his income. Hitherto literature had merely been a relaxation to him ; he had in no way considered it as a means of support ; but now that his father's affairs were rapidly going from bad to worse, it was necessary for him to make every penny he could.

His high sense of honour appears notably, in this connection, in his proposal to resign his position on the Board of Control rather than vote in support of a modified Slavery Abolition Bill brought in by the ministry, the provisions of the bill not being such as he could conscientiously endorse as satisfactory. He had his reward, for his resignation was refused by the ministry, to their honour and his ; and he was allowed to criticise the measure, and to vote as he pleased.

His acceptance, in 1834, of an appointment as legal adviser to the Supreme Council of India was due in great measure to his distaste for the idea of writing, not, as he said, because his mind was full, but because his pockets were empty.

He could have made far more by his pen than he did, had he chosen to condescend to what he classed as "hack work," but this he would not do ; and the needs

of his family were becoming more pressing. It was thus that, in spite of the exile that it meant, he gladly accepted the Indian post. The salary was handsome, and he calculated that out of it he could in a few years save enough to set matters straight at home. One of his sisters agreed to go with him, and in February 1834 they set sail.

The four years he spent in India were crammed full of work. He threw himself into his official duties with as much enthusiasm as if the career had been of his own choosing. His enlightened efforts on behalf of the natives, particularly in the matter of education and the question of criminal procedure, ran counter to certain private interests in India, and exposed him to a storm of the vilest abuse in a Press whose liberty of speech he generously championed. This he could afford to disregard, for he left a monument behind him in the result of his work. He wrote a couple of articles for the *Edinburgh*, and the well-known *Essay on Bacon*, while he was in India ; his scanty leisure was for the most part taken up, as was always the case with him, by omnivorous reading.

Macaulay's was in no way a deeply reflective nature. A certain restlessness of mind kept him for ever amassing information, or at least noting the thoughts of others. When books were within reach, he was scarcely ever without one in his hand ; and when he could not read, he used to indulge in mental gymnastics to exercise his memory. In India the classics were his chief recreation. A letter of his states that in his first twelve months there he had read through some thirty Greek and Latin authors, many of them twice. In the two or three months occupied by his journey home he learnt enough German to read Goethe and Schiller

The rush and pressure of official work seem, by the time he returned, to have a little blunted his enthusiasm for politics ; for he wrote that he felt more than half inclined to abandon politics and give himself wholly to letters, to undertake some great historical work that should be at once the business and pleasure of his life. This he was not able to do immediately ; for in the year after his return he accepted a seat in Lord Melbourne's ministry. When, however, the Tories came into power at the General Election of 1841, Macaulay was freed from the responsibilities of office, and, though he continued to hold the seat for Edinburgh to which he had been elected in 1839, he was able to give his main attention to literature. He set to work to plan his *History of England* and was soon immersed in it. Though he held office again for a year, from 1846 to 1847, under Lord John Russell, it distracted him very little from his new occupation. He was rapidly losing his taste for the strife of politics and the hubbub of social engagements that accompanied it, and the last fifteen years of his life were spent practically in retirement. He sought the literary society that he loved, and rejoiced at the possibility of escape from the miscellaneous social calls that before had overwhelmed him. From 1847 to 1852 he did not even sit in Parliament. In the former year political disagreement with his constituents lost him his seat for Edinburgh ; but he accepted the honour of enthusiastic re-election to it five years later, though he only spoke thrice again in Parliament after the event.

Meantime, while the *History* was growing under his hands, he astonished the world by the publication (in 1842) of his *Lays of Ancient Rome*. Delight succeeded astonishment, and the success of the *Lays* surpassed

anything of the kind since *Marmion* appeared. They had all Scott's vigour and directness—the "cut and thrust style, without any flourish," as Christopher North said in his review of them in *Blackwood*—and Macaulay, critic, orator and historian, was now hailed as a second Scott. Within ten years 18,000 copies of the book were sold.

In the following year (1843) his collected *Essays* were published, after some hesitation on Macaulay's part. They had previously been collected and printed in Philadelphia by an enterprising American publisher; and it was in great measure the difficulties arising from this, and from the number of copies of the American edition that were finding their way into England, that decided Macaulay to issue an authorised collection here.

The loss of his Edinburgh seat in 1847 gave him a very welcome accession of leisure to finish the first two volumes of his *History of England*, which appeared in November 1848. With the exception of Gibbon's great work, no history within the range of modern literature has been received with anything approaching the enthusiasm, or the weighty consideration, that Macaulay's called forth. So great was its success that he wrote in his journal that he was "half afraid of this strange prosperity. . . . I feel extremely anxious about the second part. Can it possibly come up to the first?"

The third and fourth volumes appeared in 1855; and a fifth, upon which he was engaged at his death, was edited by his sister, Lady Trevelyan, and posthumously published in 1861. The picturesqueness with which he clothed historical narration proved irresistibly attractive. In his day, as he says in his *Essay on Hallam*, there were good historical essays and good historical

romances, but an amalgamation of the two, which was his aim, had not been attempted. History was becoming too scientific and abstract a science : his task was to make it real and living. For this his style, always narrative and oratorical rather than philosophical, was well suited ; and in spite of the author's tendency to dogmatic confidence, and the extent to which the human interest is allowed to overshadow the historical, Macaulay's history remains one of the most remarkable, as it has always been one of the most popular, works of its kind. It has been translated into every European language, and it is said that in the United States no book except the Bible ever had so large a sale. The sum Macaulay received from his publishers as the result of the sales was unprecedented ; it was, indeed, sufficient to make him at once a wealthy man. In one year alone he received £20,000.

On New Year's Day, 1856, he wrote in his diary : "A new year. I am happy in fame, fortune, family affection—most eminently so. Under these heads I have nothing to ask more ; but my health is very indifferent." Four years before this, in the summer of 1852, he had been suddenly attacked by heart disease, followed by a severe illness from asthma. His constitution, which till then had been robust, never recovered from the shock, and his strength gradually diminished. He had little suffering, and as the years went on and he found himself less and less able for any exertion, he looked forward to the end with complete serenity. On his fiftieth birthday his entry in his diary had been : "My birthday. I am fifty. Well, I have had a happy life. I do not know that any one whom I have seen close has had a happier." Even the distress of failing strength did not disturb the quiet

content that filled his last years. His "happy life" was so to the close. He had become a rich man by his own efforts, and by work that had been a pleasure to him; he was famous, honoured by all ranks, and surrounded by affection. He had a right to be content.

The bestowal of a peerage upon him, in 1857, was a surprise and an unalloyed pleasure to him. "It was one of the few things," said his sister, "that everybody approved; he enjoyed it himself, as he did everything, simply and cordially."

The greatest unhappiness of his life was that which clouded its last months—the knowledge that his sister, Lady Trevelyan, with whose life his had become completely bound up, would be obliged to go to India to join her husband, who was Governor of Madras. Macaulay died before she started, but the thought of the coming separation made him very unhappy. "However," he says, "I read, and write, and contrive to forget my sorrow for whole hours. But it recurs, and will recur." He was never married. He had had all his life no affections save for his family; now they were centred in this sister and her children. Though essentially affectionate, he seems to have been almost without the deeper passions of love or hate. It was probably this that gave him the equanimity of disposition that made him so attractive. He was always the same; always cheerful, kind-hearted, unselfish and sincere; the best son, the best brother and the truest friend a man could desire. His charity was unbounded, and ungrudging in spite of ingratitude. None in distress ever appealed to him in vain; and one of his last actions, the day before his death, was to dictate a letter addressed to a poor curate, enclosing twenty-five pounds.

Under the stress of a severe winter in 1859 his forces gradually failed ; and he died, peacefully, on 28th December. A few days later he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

"I have thought several times of late," he had written in his diary early in the year, "that the last scene of the play was approaching. I should wish to act it simply, but with fortitude and gentleness united." He had his wish. "He died," says Sir George Trevelyan, "as he had always wished to die, without pain ; without any formal farewell ; preceding to the grave all whom he loved ; and leaving behind him a great and honourable name, and the memory of a life every action of which was as clean and transparent as one of his own sentences."

XIX.

CARLYLE.

THOMAS CARLYLE is, like Burns, a characteristic example of the genius peculiarly fostered by the austere yet affectionate family life found among the humbler Scottish folk. When he was born at Ecclefechan in Dumfriesshire (on 4th December, 1795), his father was settled there as a prosperous stone-mason. James Carlyle came of a sturdy Border stock that had probably not been altogether innocent of a share in the raids that made that country notorious; at all events his kinsfolk were known as "pithy, bitter speaking bodies, and awfu' fighters," a description that in after years might very well have been applied to his son Thomas.

In the beautiful chapter of his *Reminiscences* that deals with his father, Carlyle more than once insists on his absolute healthiness of body and mind. He was a father to be respected and admired rather than warmly loved, or perhaps it would be more just to say that the national undemonstrativeness in the matter of family affection was intensified in him by the stern view that he took of life. A father, this, whose worth his son would not fully realise till he had reached man's estate. "His heart seemed as if walled in," says Carlyle, "he had not the free means to unbosom himself. . . . Till of late years I was ever more or less awed and

early as possible in March.

I write at present mainly to ask you about some Poetical Pieces, entitled Corn Law Rhymes, the Village Patriarch, &c; and whether a short notice of them would be acceptable for your next Number. The Author appears to be a middle-aged Mechanic, at least Poor Man, of Sheffield or the neighbourhood; a Radical, yet not without devoutness, passionate, affectionate. Mournfully in earnest. His Rhymes have more of sincerity, and genuine natural fire than anything that has come in my way of late years. Both on himself and his writings, and their social and moral import, there were several things to be said. I would also willingly do the unknown man a kindness, or rather a piece of justice, for he is, what so few are, a man and no Clothes-horse. — If you disapprove of this little project, perhaps Mr Rees can favour me with a loan of the volumes; there are three, I think, and very thin ones: at all events, have the goodness to let me hear from you.

I have given up the notion of hawking my little Manuscript Book about any farther: for a long time it has lain quiet in its drawer, waiting for a better day. The Bookselling trade seems on the edge of dissolution; the force of Puffing can go no further; yet Bankruptcy clamours at every door. 'Let fate' to serve the Devil, and get no wages even from him! — The poor Bookseller Guild, I often predict to myself, will ere long be found unfit for the strange post it now helps in our European world; and give place to new and higher arrangements, of which the coming shadows are already becoming visible. More of this by another opportunity.

We have two Saint-Simonian Missionaries here, full of earnest zeal; copious enough in half-true, and to me rather wearisome jargon. By and by you should have some account of that matter: Southey's in the Quarterly was trivial, unthinking, and on the whole erroneous and worthless. I know a man here, who could do it, perhaps much to your satisfaction.

Believe me always,
My Dear Sir
Faithfully Yours,
Thomas Carlyle

THOMAS CARLYLE.

Facsimile (slightly reduced) from a Letter to the Editor of *The Edinburgh Review*, offering to contribute an Article on Ebenezer Elliot's *Corn Law Rhymes*. (Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 34,61[illegible])

[Face page 242.

chilled by him." But, once old enough to appreciate his father's character, Carlyle says he found him in several respects one of the most interesting men he ever knew. "A man of rigid, even scrupulous veracity;" "a natural man, singularly free from all manner of affectation;" "a man of open sense," delighted to hear of all things that were worth talking of, but with "the most entire and open contempt for all idle tattle". His son inherited his intense love of truth and deep reverence for justice, as he did his rugged self-reliance; but there was an even higher quality, that in the father sprang from absolute healthiness of mind—an absence of resentment and a complete forgetfulness of what "was past and disagreeable"—that his son frankly envied him. The same steadiness of mind that made him indifferent to "the clamours or the murmurs of public opinion" was denied to his son, though the latter had enough of his self-reliance to feel confident of compelling their silence. There can be no doubt that from his early manhood, ill-health—a cruel dyspepsia induced by the long fasts and poor meals of his days of struggle as a student—had much to do with Carlyle's bitterness of disposition, and there is something pathetic in his determined reference of his father's many virtues to "the health which in mind as in body was conspicuous in him". "Let me learn of him," says Carlyle, humbly and from his heart; "let me write my books as he built his houses, and walk as blamelessly through this shadow world. . . . I can see my dear father's life in some measure as the sunk pillar on which mine was to rise and be built."

Carlyle's mother, with whom alone, he says, his heart "played freely," was an affectionate, simple woman of great piety, very little educated, so little, indeed, as to

learn writing late in her life in order to write to her son when he was separated from her.

The boy was miserable at school, for he was very sensitive, very shy, and cleverer than most of his school-fellows, who resented his love of solitude and his books. His lot was made harder by his having given his mother a promise that he would never fight, a fact which made him an easy prey to the bully.

Unafraid that, as neighbours foretold, if he educated his son he would grow up to despise his ignorant parents, Carlyle's father determined to give him as good an education as he could procure; with noble faith, as Carlyle afterwards said, launching him forth into a world that he himself had never been permitted to visit. And so it was decided that he should go to Edinburgh University to qualify himself for ministry in the Church.

He was but a boy of fourteen when, in company with another lad, he made the journey to Edinburgh, walking the whole eighty miles thither from Ecclefechan. The two settled together in some cheap lodgings; and for five years Carlyle lived the usual college life of the poor Scottish student, a life desperately frugal and with little in it of relaxation or variety of any kind.

He attended the classes desultorily and without any great enthusiasm; speculative studies would have interested him far more than the formal course prescribed. By the time he left the university in 1814 he was almost determined to give up the idea of the Church, a profession on which his sentiments had become "mostly of the unfavourable kind". A year or two later the determination became final, to the disappointment of his father, who, however, was compelled by his sense of right to respect his son's scruples.

Four years of schoolmastering followed on his leaving the university. For some time, when he first went to Edinburgh, mathematics had so far interested him that he became fairly proficient in the science, and this enabled him to obtain masterships, first at a school at Annan from 1814 to 1816, and subsequently at Kirkcaldy from 1816 to 1818. The work was very little to his taste; but the salary he gained, small as it was, relieved his father of the burden of supporting him, and therefore Carlyle endured it as long as he could. His endurance was helped, during the two years he spent at Kirkcaldy, by the companionship of Edward Irving, another young schoolmaster, who became one of Carlyle's closest and most valuable friends. "But for Irving," says Carlyle, "I had never known what the communion of man with man means." This friendship made Kirkcaldy tolerable. Irving was fairly well supplied with books; and these, together with "the blessed conquest of a friend," made Carlyle almost happy; but when Irving left the place Carlyle could not face the drudgery alone. What he says in the *Reminiscences* is significant: "From the first I disliked it, and by swift degrees grew to hate it more and more. . . . At the end my solitary desperate conclusion was fixed: that I, for my own part, would prefer to perish in the ditch, if necessary, rather than continue living by such a trade, and peremptorily gave it up accordingly."

With some ninety pounds saved, and very vague prospects, he went back to Edinburgh. There he spent three years of unrest and struggle, reading Law for a short time and then abandoning it, taking pupils when he could get them, doing small pieces of hack-work for publishers, and, most important of all, as it proved,

learning German. He was made wretched with misgivings as to what he would make of his future, and distress at the disappointment he had caused to his parents by his abandonment of the Church. He lived miserably poorly, and there began now the torture of dyspepsia which soured his view of everything in life. He tried various remedies which made him worse, and his letters at this time show him sunk in an almost hopeless despair. He wrote to a friend in 1820, after one of his many checks: "I am like a being thrown from another planet on this dark terrestrial ball, an alien, a pilgrim . . . and life is to me like a pathless, a waste and a howling wilderness". This was written in the darkest hour, before the clouds lifted; and its want of manliness, and the contrast in which it stands to his later courageous fronting of difficulties, point surely to distress of body as well as distress of mind.

At last gleams of sun began to shine through the murk. After fruitless efforts to obtain work on some of the reviews, he managed to get employment for the *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, for which he wrote some sixteen articles; "not much money in it," he says, "but a certain drill, and, still better, a sense of accomplishing something". Moreover, his study of German had opened up a new world to him. Not only did he find the spirit of contemporary German thought completely in sympathy with his own, but—and this was of more immediate moment—he saw that as a translator of German literature, at a time when its vogue here was rapidly growing, he could hope to gain a very necessary livelihood with more certainty than by bombarding magazines and reviews with unsolicited articles. Goethe was, in a very literal sense, a revelation to him. Of his work Carlyle says it came

as "a Gospel of Gospels" to him, and saved him from "destruction outward and inward". Jean Paul Richter, Fichte, and other German thinkers helped him on in this "new world"; and, in spite of his eager enthusiasm for German philosophy and ethics, he did not neglect the more prosaic, though still pleasant, task of translating German romances, which proved easier passports to the good graces of editors.

The *New Edinburgh Review* printed an article of his upon Goethe's *Faust* in 1822; and in the following year he induced the editor of the *London Magazine* to accept successive instalments of a *Life of Schiller*, which ran into the year 1824, and was anonymously published in book form in 1825. This was received with some little praise at home, and had the honour abroad of being translated into German and published with an introduction by Goethe. This led to Carlyle's tackling *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, his version of which was printed in Edinburgh in 1824. The translation was freely admitted to be admirable, even by those who had no admiration for Goethe's romance itself; its sale brought Carlyle nearly £200 and this combined result was encouraging. It is pleasant to refer to the generosity that Carlyle displayed to his less fortunate brothers as soon as he was in a position to do so. He had no sooner received the money from *Wilhelm Meister* than he set to work to dispose of a great part of it in assisting one brother to go to Edinburgh and study medicine, and another to buy a farm. "What any brethren of our father's house possess," he said, "I look on as a common stock from which all are entitled to draw."

He was the better able to help his brothers as he had, between 1822 and 1824, another welcome source

of income in the shape of a tutorship that his good friend Irving had obtained for him. At first Carlyle was delighted with his new post. The two boys he was to teach were clever, and their parents full of tactful consideration for him, treating him, as he admitted, with a degree of respect he scarcely deserved, and consulting his convenience to a most uncommon extent. After two years, however, he became restless and discontented; he discovered that he was "selling the very quintessence of his spirit for £200 a year," and threw up the work.

After some months spent in London, much in Irving's society, he retired to a farm which his father had leased for him at Hoddam Hill, near the Solway, with the idea that Thomas should work there at his German translations in peace while his brother Alexander attended to the farm work. The year Carlyle spent there was one of the happiest of his life, "a not ignoble russet-coated idyll," he afterwards called it. He was busy at work on a commissioned volume of translations, his health was fairly good, and his mind tranquil. Unfortunately the upheaval was not far off.

Some four years before, Irving had introduced Carlyle to Jane Welsh, the daughter of a prosperous surgeon at Haddington, who had died when she was twelve and left her heir to his property, which consisted mainly of a farm at Craigenputtock in Dumfriesshire. She was now a girl of nineteen; beautiful, witty, and thoroughly spoilt. Irving had for a time been her tutor, and she had imagined herself passionately in love with him; but an attachment Irving formed when he was at Kirkcaldy had made it impossible for him honourably to return her affection, and soon afterwards he was safely married. Carlyle came into her life at a

time when her intellectual nature was fast developing, and their intimacy was at first confined to a Platonic interchange of ideas. But by degrees a tenderer sentiment invaded this intellectual comradeship ; and after two years of exchange of confidences it became evident to both that they were falling in love with each other. The anxiety with which they sought to deny the fact to themselves and to each other was a proof of its truth.

In 1824 matters were so far advanced that she promised to marry him as soon as he was independent in means. That she was by this time genuinely in love with him is evident from the solicitude she showed for Carlyle's self-respect by making over her inheritance of farm and property to her mother for her life, while at the same time she bequeathed it to Carlyle in the case of her own and her mother's death. In 1825, when Carlyle was at Hoddam Hill, Jane Welsh visited his parents as his promised wife, and in the following autumn, on 17th October, 1826, they were married.

The young pair set up house in Edinburgh, and for the first year were fairly at accord with one another, and were happy. Carlyle obtained admittance to the *Edinburgh Review*, to which he contributed essays (mainly on the subject of German Literature) which were the beginning of his remarkable series of critical articles. The *Review*, however, was practically his only source of income. A volume of translations, *German Romance*, did not sell well ; he tried to write a novel, but failed ; he competed unsuccessfully for a professorship at St. Andrews. Discouragement attacked him, and the only thing that supported him was his absorption in his work. This became fatal to his domestic happiness. The young wife whose heart had, so to speak, been won through her head, resented the

loss of intellectual companionship that it involved. From breakfast till the late afternoon she rarely saw anything of her husband, and this state of things had begun almost before the honeymoon month was ended. She had no child to occupy her life, and her husband was becoming more and more wrapped up in his work, impatient of company, and anxious to get away from the noise and distractions of the town. That there was a capacity for deep affection on both sides, or at any rate on his, there is no doubt ; but neither of them was able to evoke the best from the other and so make a complete understanding possible. Mrs. Carlyle believed steadfastly and proudly in her husband's genius, but she was without the touch of sympathy that would have awakened the dormant tenderness in his nature. Each of their natures was in its degree too brilliant to be restful to the other. She, who had been indulged all her life, was half-pleased and half-indignant at the knowledge that she had found her master ; he undeniably was selfishly heedless of her happiness or unhappiness.

The "little rift" was widening when, in obedience to his desire for quiet, she agreed to settle down with him at the Craigenputtock farm. The move was made in the spring of 1828, and for six years they lived, practically by themselves, in this lonely house, amidst miles of bleak, dreary moorland—he buried in his work, she with nothing but household drudgery to occupy her. It was characteristic of her that while she made no secret of her grievances, and would grumble and even scoff at her husband, she would allow no one else to do the same. She was proud of him, and at bottom fond of him, but her pride added an unfortunate bitterness to the manner in which she relieved her soreness of heart.

A few visits, paid and received, were all that broke the outward monotony of the life at Craigenputtock. Most notable among these was the unexpected arrival, one August day in 1833, of Emerson, not yet a famous writer, but, to quote Carlyle, "one of the most loveable creatures in himself we had ever looked on". He stayed only twenty-four hours with them; but a night's talk was sufficient to forge between these two dissimilar men a link which held strongly. At the time Emerson was able to delight Carlyle by telling him of the unsuspected influence his work was exercising in America; and afterwards Carlyle's writings had no more enthusiastic or more generous advocate than Emerson, to whom Carlyle was materially indebted for a host of readers across the Atlantic.

On 28th October, 1830, Carlyle noted in his diary: "Written a strange piece on Clothes. Know not what will come of it. I could make a kind of book, but cannot afford it." This was the original sketch which, before a year was out, he had expanded into the inimitable *Sartor Resartus*. He took it to London in 1831, but could find no publisher bold enough to undertake it, in spite of his conviction that the "Clothes Philosophy" was, as he wrote to his wife, "exactly what all intelligent men are wanting". He returned home, disappointed, the only valuable fruit of his journey to London being a friendship begun with John Stuart Mill.

His father's death, closely followed by the news of that of Goethe, depressed him. Craigenputtock began to be unendurable; the more so as he found himself continually hampered by his want of access to books. Meanwhile, in spite of occasional essays in *Fraser's Magazine* and elsewhere, his means were as small as

ever, and some decided step was inevitable. After much difficulty he induced the editor of *Fraser* to publish *Sartor Resartus*, in parts, in the magazine. Its reception was chilling. The public was puzzled by the nondescript character of the work—now philosophical, now autobiographical, now satirical—as well as by the style in which it was written. Words flung off like this, at white heat, bewildered them, and there were very few who could see through the eccentricities of manner to the value of the matter beneath. "When is that stupid series of articles by the crazy tailor going to end?" asked one of *Fraser's* subscribers. "Stop that stuff or stop my paper," wrote another indignantly to the editor. And even when, five years later, after Carlyle's success with his *French Revolution*, the "Clothes Philosophy" appeared as a book, it found no readers save in America, where Emerson's faithful advocacy won it the attention it deserved.

In the summer of 1834 the Carlyles came to a brave decision to burn their boats and venture all upon an invasion of London. Carlyle's resentment at the heedlessness of those for whom he wrote was keen; but he had not lost his courage, and was full of a scheme, which had for some time been maturing in his mind, of writing a history of the French Revolution. For his purpose he must have access to both men and books, and he could find this nowhere so well as London. It was in June that he settled with his wife and a faithful servant in the now well-known house in Cheyne Row, Chelsea, which was his home for the rest of his life.

Three years later the *French Revolution* was finished and published. Bearing in mind the reception of *Sartor*, Carlyle was far from sanguine as to the result of his history. He wrote it, he said, "without hope of it,

except of being done with it". He was agreeably surprised to find that not only did it attract attention, and thereby establish the beginnings of a reputation for him, but that men of such mettle as Thackeray, Macaulay and Hallam esteemed it highly and said so without reserve. Its sale, however, was not enough to bring him almost any money, except what came, thanks to Emerson's untiring efforts, from America. "My friends think I have found the art of living upon nothing," says one of Carlyle's letters at this time. Fortunately for him, the curiosity of the public to see and hear a new "lion" has a market value; and in the year the *French Revolution* was published, and in the three succeeding, Carlyle made a certain success with four sets of lectures, each of which brought him in a substantial sum. The public, his wife said, determined that Carlyle was worth keeping alive at a moderate rate.

His *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* were published in 1839, a work on *Chartism* in 1840, and *Heroes and Hero-Worship* (which had formed the last of the four series of lectures) in 1841.

The death of his wife's mother in 1842 made a welcome difference to their means; and Carlyle, who had been constantly grumbling at the "wear and tear of the huge roaring Niagara" of London life, began to hint at a return to the peace of Craigenputtock. This idea was emphatically, and very wisely, opposed by his wife, and he gave way. Hers was no happy life in London; but at least they had friends there, and possible distraction for her from Carlyle's perpetual complaints which she was so ill-suited to appease. Besides this, it was obviously undesirable for him to desert the literary society that London offered.

The next six or seven years were uneventful and

busy. *Past and Present* (1843), *Cromwell's Life and Letters* (1845), and the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850) were published, and Carlyle was possessed for a time by an enthusiasm for politics which made him seriously consider the question of entering public life. He had a brief pleasure in renewing his personal knowledge of Emerson, who came to England on a lecturing tour in 1847. But on the whole he grew more morose and discontented. His political interest culminated in a tour in Ireland which made him miserable ; his health was bad ; several of his dearest friends were dead ; and his wife and he were becoming more and more estranged. "I am very weary," he writes in 1849 ; "all the old tremulous affection lies in me, but it is as if frozen ;" and again, to Emerson, a year or two later : "I am infinitely solitary". A not unnatural, but entirely baseless, jealousy of his wife's on account of his friendship with Lady Ashburton, a clever, sympathetic woman and a brilliant leader of society, was only brought to an end by Lady Ashburton's death, and in the meantime the gap between husband and wife had grown wider. Mrs. Carlyle had been willing to sacrifice her comfort and her happiness for the sake of his genius, and it was not surprising that she should rebel at his not only giving her nothing in the way of companionship in return, but making over to another woman what was her right in this respect. Carlyle was half-affectionately penitent and half-tenderly reproachful after her jealous outbursts, but he never was quite able to understand her point of view ; and though after Lady Ashburton's death the two were happier and lived more harmoniously, it was too late for any complete sympathy between them.

The success of Carlyle's *Life of John Sterling*, one of

the best biographies in the language, was what first led him to his greatest undertaking, the *Life of Frederick the Great*. The work would evidently be laborious, and did not particularly attract him ; but he had discernment enough to see that the public would read biography where they would turn away from philosophy or politics, and the subject, once considered, irresistibly took hold of him. Begun in 1852, *Frederick the Great* occupied him for thirteen years. He was infinitely industrious in his collection of material, and characteristically persistent in his complaints of the hugeness of his self-imposed task. By degrees order emerged from the chaos. The two first volumes appeared in 1858, a third in 1862, a fourth in 1864, the fifth and sixth in 1865. The book was his final triumph, and was the signal for the long-delayed outburst of acclamation and honour. It incontestably proved him the greatest prose writer of his day ; and compelled attention to the force of a genius whose words came "straight from the heart of a man" if ever any did.

In 1865 he received the distinction of election as Lord Rector of Edinburgh University, and after the somewhat trying ordeal of his inaugural address went in the spring of 1866 on a visit to one of his brothers, happy in his honours, happy in the restfulness of his brother's house after the turmoil of the town, and perhaps happiest of all in affectionate letters received from his wife, whose pride in his success seemed to draw them nearer to each other than they had been. Barely three weeks later this new happiness was changed to the deepest grief, at the news of his wife's sudden death from heart disease. All the affection which, as he said some years before, lay "frozen within him" came to the surface after the death of his "poor little woman,"

who in her lifetime had not known how to evoke it. His grief for her was deep and his remorse sincere, and neither lost their poignancy as long as he lived.

Of the remainder of his life there is not much to say. He had done his life's work, and now was reaping his reward. Honours from his own and other countries were freely offered him ; he was the object of veneration from strangers, and solicitous care from his friends ; his nature mellowed and its asperities softened with the approach of an old age conscious of victory won ; he even learnt to laugh at his own occasional outbursts of ferocity. Gentle, venerable and loveable, yet never losing the power of indignant denunciation of wrong, he tranquilly lived out the evening of his days.

When death came to him, on 4th February, 1881, he had won from life all that it had to give him, and almost his only regret was that he had not given greater happiness to his "poor little woman". The nation would have laid him with his peers in Westminster Abbey ; but, in accordance with his own wish, he was buried beside his parents in the little churchyard at Ecclefechan.

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ride today, will
come with me tomor-
row to Manchester;
and I ought to arrive
there ——— at 3 P.M.
I will stop at your
office on my way
home: for, I doubt
not, you have also
some Acadian letters
for me.

Ever with best wishes
Yours heartily,

Rd. Emerson

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

Facsimile of a page of a Private Letter, dated "Ambleside, 29th Feb., 1848". (Brit. Mus. Add. MS. 33,515, f. 101.)

[Face page 257.

XX.

EMERSON.

It is an apt comparison that Matthew Arnold makes, in his *Discourses in America*, between Emerson and Marcus Aurelius. He points out that the relation in which each of them stands closest to us is the same, that of "friend and aider" of those who would live the highest life. Each is nearer to us in his perfect sympathy, his "hopeful, serene, beautiful temper," than by reason of his greatness as a philosopher or a writer. Emerson, indeed, seems only incidentally to have joined the ranks of great writers. He had a message for the world, and he wrote because he needed the medium. That he became one of the finest writers in the language was a necessary consequence of his exquisite sense of fitness. A slipshod or exaggerated style would have been as impossible to him as an ugly moral action. Admirable as his writings are, it is the personality they express that gives them their highest value, the fact that they reflect the soul of the "truest, sanest, most moral, sweetest literary man on record," as Walt Whitman called him.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born on 25th May, 1803, in Boston, Massachusetts. His father, who was descended from a long line of Unitarian ministers, was pastor of the First Church in Boston; a kindly, tolerant, sociable man, of broad views and strict principles;

married to an excellent woman who tended her children and her household with the same gentle dignity that he showed towards his flock. He died in 1811, leaving but little provision for his widow and children. Mrs. Emerson, however, generously and vigorously aided by a sister-in-law (who idolised her nephews but kept them in strict order), managed by dint of much drudgery to give her four boys a good education. Though the pinch of circumstances was often sharply felt, it was no unhappy boyhood for them ; and it speaks volumes for the courage and affection of mother and aunt that Emerson could afterwards refer almost gratefully to "the iron band of poverty, of necessity, of austerity," which "held them staunch," and made them, "despite themselves, reverers of the grand, the beautiful and the good".

He did not distinguish himself at school, except by some slight ease in speech-making and turning rhymes. One of his school-fellows could in after years only remember as characteristic of Emerson's boyhood a quiet courtesy of manner and a slowness in forming new acquaintances. The same school-fellow was Emerson's "class-mate" at Harvard, where he was so "universally amiable" that he seemed to his friend almost to need a few harsher traits and a more masculine vigour.

When he was fourteen the "spiritual-looking boy in blue nankeen" blossomed into the collegian, and entered Harvard as "President's freshman". This was a position analogous to that of a "sizar" at Cambridge, lodging and board being given to the student in return for certain services, some of them sufficiently menial to call for the exercise of all Emerson's amiability. "Quiet, unobtrusive, and only a fair scholar according to the standard of the college authorities,"

is the description of Emerson the collegian, who left Harvard as a graduate in 1821.

Three or four years of school-teaching put sufficient into his pocket to enable him to afford attendance at the Divinity School at Cambridge (Mass.). He looked without the slightest hesitation to the Church as his career, and became entirely absorbed in his studies for the ministry. His sense of their seriousness made him unusually grave for his years, but his gravity had a peculiar fascination for those who knew him. There was nothing of priggishness or of conscious austerity in it. It was the outcome of a deep thoughtfulness that was forming his character. One who was his pupil at this time said in later life that, looking back on these years, he seemed to see Emerson "like a captive philosopher set to tending flocks".

The divinity studies came to an end, and in 1826 Emerson received his license to preach. A winter in Florida for the sake of his health was followed by two years of tentative preaching in different places. Already the independence that throughout marked his attitude towards ethical and religious questions was declaring itself. No conformity to custom was to be recommended, he maintained, that ran counter to a man's private judgment. This belief in the sacredness of honest conviction (as being, if a man lived the highest life in his power, a direct inspiration from God) was the keynote of Emerson's philosophy. He pushed the idea to extremes, no doubt, for he seemed to presuppose in other men a judgment as sane as his own; but in the main the principle was a healthy one. Custom, the rule of life that had the sanction of authority, accepted beliefs—none of these were to be received on their own merits or without examination by the light

of a man's own reason. Emerson's fixed belief, which crystallised in his mind as he grew older, in the right intuition of a reverent mind—truth, in fact, recognised in the promptings of the "still small voice" within—explains the position he at once adopted towards convention or tradition. His mind represented the best spirit of the New World at a time when its ideals were untainted; an honest determination to think and act always from the best motive, irrespective of antecedent or of consequence; and an indifference to authority as such. Each age must judge beliefs for itself, in the light of its own knowledge. "Meek young men," he said, "grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given; forgetful that Cicero, Locke and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote those books." It must not be forgotten that all this was conditioned by his implicit trust in the infallibility of intuition in a fine nature, a belief which led to the serene optimism that so astonished Carlyle. It also implied a saving grace of tolerance of the convictions of others, which removed him from the danger of anything like arrogance or self-assertiveness.

His first regular appointment as minister was his ordination as assistant to the pastor of the Second Church in Boston in 1829. The pastor resigned soon afterwards, and the full duties devolved upon Emerson. In the same year he married Ellen Louisa Tucker, the daughter of a Boston merchant, a beautiful girl who, to her husband's deep grief, died two years later of consumption.

Not many months after his wife's death Emerson's ministry came to an end, so far as attachment to any particular church went, by his resignation of his pastor-

ship owing to a change in his opinions with regard to the rite of the Lord's Supper. His conscientiousness would allow of no such compromises as were affectionately suggested by his congregation, to whom he had greatly endeared himself. "It is my desire," he said in his farewell address to them, "to do nothing which I cannot do with my whole heart. Having said this, I have said all." He made very clear to them the nature of his scruples, and the grounds upon which they were founded, and it became evident that a regretful farewell was the only course possible. This was in September 1832. In December of the same year, his health having given way under the anxieties of the last few months, he set sail for Europe, disappointed at having achieved so little in a career of which he had hoped so much, but with "projects of action, literature and philosophy," as he wrote to his brother, "sprouting and blooming" in his head.

He was nine months away from America. After a short tour on the Continent of Europe he crossed over into England, and shortly afterwards travelled into Scotland, where, in August 1833, his memorable meeting with Carlyle took place. His "angel visit" to Craigenputtock only extended to twenty-four hours; but it was sufficient for the two philosophers, so different in temperament, to discover much common ground of thought, and so many points of agreement in theory that the visit resulted in enthusiasm on Emerson's part and undisguised affection on Carlyle's. Emerson saw in Carlyle the same "incessant demand for sincerity," that was his own guiding principle; this alone was sufficient to make him Carlyle's ardent and generous champion.

Soon after his return to America an uncle of his

mother's, who was pastor of the town of Concord, offered him and his mother a home in the manse. Emerson lived there for about a year, till the fact of his again becoming engaged to be married made it necessary for him to look out for a house of his own. He found one in the same town, "a modest, homelike, comfortable residence," to which, in September 1835, he took his bride. There he made his home for the rest of his life. His wife was the daughter of Dr. Jackson, a prominent surgeon in the neighbouring town of Plymouth, and appears to have been in every way a sympathetic and affectionate helpmate. Emerson described her as "the soul of faith".

During the next year or two he delivered a number of lectures, chiefly in Boston. These at first took the form of popular discourses on scientific topics; but as Emerson grew more at home on the platform he made excursions into the various departments of thought that chiefly interested him. English Literature, the Philosophy of History, and Human Culture furnished him with subjects for three successive courses.

Two incidents, during this time, stand out as indicative of the beginning of his literary career. Struck with the genius displayed in Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (which was then struggling forth in parts in *Fraser's Magazine*) he had by letter renewed his acquaintance with its author, and thus began a correspondence which continued until Emerson's last visit to Europe in 1872. Carlyle declared that Emerson and an Irish priest were the only two men who had displayed the slightest desire to read *Sartor* when it was appearing in *Fraser*, and welcomed with almost incredulous pleasure Emerson's assurance that the book, and all Carlyle's work, had already a number of admirers in America,

and that he proposed having an edition of *Sartor* printed in Boston. This was done in 1836. Emerson performed the editorial part of the work, and wrote an appreciative introduction to the book; a friend of his defrayed all the cost of publishing the first edition. It met with a reception that should have put to shame the apathy of the English public. "Doctors of Divinity, and the solemn *Review* itself have broke silence to praise you," Emerson wrote to Carlyle; "I have quite lost my plume as your harbinger."

The same year saw the publication, in Boston, of a small volume entitled *Nature*. It appeared anonymously, but Emerson's authorship was an open secret. It was his definite pronouncement of his philosophy of life; a beautiful statement of a beautiful belief; "philosophy written in the language of poetry," one of his critics styled it. The keynote of the whole is the necessity of recognising God in Nature, and not as standing outside of Nature. The examination of natural beauty leads to the conviction of the identity of natural and spiritual law; beauty, in its largest and profoundest sense, is "one expression for the universe; God in the all-fair". External nature, according to Emerson, is the visible expression of the Divine mind; and the will of God, instead of "the rigid despotism of our extra-mundane ruler," appears in this philosophy as "the free agency of an indwelling power in nature".

The book did not attract much attention at first, but made its impression gradually. It proved, as Emerson on sending a copy to Carlyle said he hoped it would, "an entering wedge for something more worthy and significant". The first series of *Essays*, which appeared five years later, had a far more immediate success. Their subject-matter appealed to a wider circle of

readers; thinkers were captivated by the wit and imagination they displayed, lovers of style by the brilliant felicity of their language. A second series appeared in 1844; and in the case of each Carlyle gratefully sought to repay some of his debt to Emerson by contributing a preface for the English edition. In 1846 Emerson published his first volume of *Poems*.

Meanwhile New England had been stirred by an intellectual movement of which Emerson found himself the centre. Those who took part in it were known as "Transcendentalists," though, as Emerson said, "Idealists" would have been a more appropriate name, their tenets being definitely antagonistic to all materialistic theories of life, and their main article of belief the necessity of taking the individual consciousness, and not the evidence of the senses, as the basis of philosophy. Some of the "Transcendentalists," especially the younger and more enthusiastic of them, were inclined to push their theories to an extravagance that it needed all Emerson's quiet strength to restrain. "We are a little wild here," he wrote to Carlyle in 1840, "with numberless projects of social reform. Not a reading man but has his draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket. I am gently mad myself." The movement, however, was no unhealthy one. It was a symptom of the ferment of new ideas in minds honestly desirous of following the truth, and, at the least, deserves respect for its sincerity. Even so unsympathetic an observer as Dickens says of it, in his *American Notes*: "Transcendentalism has its occasional vagaries (what school has not?), but it has good healthful qualities in spite of them". A magazine, called *The Dial*, was published as the mouthpiece of these enthusiasts, and existed for four years, part of the time

under Emerson's editorship. The best of his early poems appeared in this.

An attempt made by the Transcendentalists to found a socialistic community on new lines, which should preserve the individuality of each member, interested Emerson ; but he only played the part of a visitor at the settlement, which existed for six years at a place called Brook Farm. He was content to watch the experiment ; half in approval of its aims, and half with humorous deprecation of its obvious weak points. He hardly regarded it as anything more serious than a prolonged intellectual picnic ; "an Age of Reason in a patty-pan," he called it.

A letter from Emerson to Carlyle describes the former's daily life. "I occupy, or improve, as we Yankees say, two acres only of God's earth ; on which is my house, my kitchen-garden, my orchard of thirty young trees, my empty barn. My house is now a very good one for comfort, and abounding in room. . . . I have food, warmth, leisure, friends, books." The letter goes on to explain how his modest income, supplemented by what he makes by his winter lectures, is riches to one of his simple tastes ; how fortunate he is, too, in his household—his wife, "an incarnation of Christianity" ; his mother ; his boy, "a piece of love and sunshine"—these, and "three domestic women, who cook and sew and run" for him. "Here I sit and write," he says, "with very little system, and, as far as regards composition, with the most fragmentary result".

In the autumn of 1847 Emerson set out for another visit to Europe, at the earnest request of many of his British admirers that he would come over and deliver a course of lectures. He lectured first in Manchester and Liverpool, and afterwards in London. He seems

to have undertaken the London lectures with some disinclination, as if he feared that Metropolitan audiences would regard him merely as a literary "lion," and as a matter of fact his audiences in London were not what they had been in the North, either in respect of their size or their keenness of appreciation. The volume entitled *Representative Men*, published in 1850, represents the best of what he delivered at this time. An interesting result of his English visit was a series of lectures dealing with this country, which he delivered on his return to America. They were not published till some years later, when they appeared, in 1856, as *English Traits*.

His renewal of his acquaintance with Carlyle (who was now settled in Chelsea) was one of the chief events of his visit to London. Though the two philosophers' had, at bottom, much in common in their ideals, each had developed too strong an individuality for them to find again the perfect sympathy that had marked their first brief meeting at Craigenputtock. Carlyle's fervid sincerity, though it was in itself the characteristic that Emerson most admired in him, had bred in him an intolerance that was foreign to Emerson's gentler nature; and though the latter wrote enthusiastically to his wife of Carlyle's "vigour and range" of thought, it is hardly to be doubted that the asperity that accompanied it somewhat repelled him. Carlyle, on his side, loved Emerson far more than Emerson's philosophy. "A pure, high-minded man," he wrote; "but I think his talent is not quite so high as I had anticipated." The two were better friends, in fact, at a distance; in their correspondence, where the personal element entered less into their estimate of each other, each recognised the other as a prophet, and a prophet after

his own heart; their methods of propaganda were different. Their interchange of letters afterwards continued as frankly as before; for Emerson's genuine admiration of Carlyle was at least met by Carlyle's ungrudging appreciation of his aims, coloured by gratitude for what Emerson had done for him with American readers. "Of one impression," Carlyle wrote to him soon after his return to America, "we fail not here: admiration of your pacific virtues, of gentle and noble tolerance, often surely tried in this place." When the Civil War was overshadowing his country, Emerson wrote to Carlyle that he would "gladly enlist his wise, thoughtful and efficient pen" to aid in holding the distracted American people to "their best tendency," and this in spite of Carlyle's "cavilling at their petty failures and bad manners"; and in his account of his last visit to England in 1872 he found a bracing influence in Carlyle's sterner view of life, while the older philosopher wondered at the "striking and curious spectacle to behold a man in these days so confidently cheerful as Emerson".

The history of the twenty years of Emerson's life that succeeded his second visit to Europe is soon told. It was busy and useful, but without much incident save what was furnished by the turmoil of the Civil War. He lectured constantly, in various places and on various subjects; but always with the same lofty purpose—the advocacy of justice, the instigation to all men to "lift their aims," the insistance or the necessity of independent thought if one would lead a life satisfying to the conscience. "I am to see to it that the world is the better for me, and to find my reward in the act," was the principle that lay at the root of all his philosophy.

The anti-slavery movement gave him a temporary

interest in politics, which he said he would, above all things, have "clear and healthful". The upheaval of society caused by the war seemed to him to open out a new promise of regeneration for social life. "I shall always respect war hereafter," he wrote to Carlyle; "the waste of life, the dreary havoc of comfort and time, are overpaid by the vistas it opens of Eternal Life, Eternal Law, reconstructing and upholding Society."

The best of his lectures and essays which belong to these years were included in two volumes, *Conduct of Life* and *Society and Solicitude*, published respectively in 1860 and 1870. He contributed, in verse as well as prose, to the *Atlantic Monthly Magazine* from its beginning in 1857, the poems, with others, being collected into a volume issued in 1867 under the title of *May-Day, and Other Pieces*. Emerson's poetry is in no way so remarkable as his prose. He had a very imperfect ear, and the rhythm of his verse is, in consequence, often ragged. Its merit is in its reflection of his intimacy with nature, which he, with rare facility, describes as she is—not, as many poets have done, as she appears through the medium of a contemplation of humanity. In the freer vehicle of prose Emerson was able to put forth his whole ability. His writings are expressions of himself to an extent traceable in few other authors. As he was confident that he had a message to deliver to the world, it was inevitable that the subjective quality should be strong in everything he wrote. If familiarity with his own point of view resulted in occasional obscurity in the manner in which he presented his thoughts—though, indeed, this appears but seldom to a careful reader—his sense of beauty, on the other hand, helped him to a rare instinct in the choice

of words, with the result that much of his prose is as beautiful as any in the language. When it comes to a matter of reasoning he is not always logical, or even orderly, in the sequence of his argument; as if his mind moved too quickly, attaining at once the position aimed at, and a little impatient of pointing out the way thither. His fragmentary method of composition, too, had much to do with this. "I dot evermore in my endless journal," he says, "a line on every knowable in nature; but the arrangement loiters long, and I get a brick-kiln instead of a house."

He received the degree of LL.D. at Harvard in 1866; and from the following year till 1879 was a member of the Board of Overseers to the University, a position he enjoyed and valued though he never took any very active part in the college administration.

One of the very few misfortunes of his life overtook him when, on a July day in 1872, his house at Concord was burnt down. The misfortune, as it proved, was turned into a source of the keenest pleasure, for it elicited a remarkable manifestation of affection on the part of his friends. A subscription was privately made amongst them, and a sum of about £3,500 raised. With this it was determined to rebuild the house, and, after handing over the necessary sum to the builder, to ask Emerson to make use of the balance in taking a voyage, in order that his health might recover from the shock it sustained at the time of the fire.

Emerson, whose health had indeed suffered severely, gladly accepted the profferred kindness. His gratitude was touchingly expressed in his letters to the treasurer of the fund. "I am a lover of men," he says in one of them, "but this recent wonderful experience of their tenderness surprises me."

He sailed for Europe, with his daughter, in October 1872; passed through England, France and Italy to Egypt; and, after six months' absence, returned to Concord to meet with a reception whose demonstrativeness overwhelmed him. The finishing touch to his happiness was to find, when he was taken to his new home, that it was in every detail a resurrection of the old one, with almost every book and picture (for much had been saved from the fire) in its familiar place.

Emerson was now seventy, and his working life was practically over, though in 1874 he compiled, with the help of a friend, a last volume from his later lectures and essays. This was published with the title of *Letters and Social Aims*. Except for loss of memory, his mental powers remained surprisingly clear till his death. These last years were, as Dr. Holmes says, like "the twilight of a long bright day, when the shadow falls gently and gradually". They were years of serene content, attended with every care that a wife's or a daughter's affection could devise, and made happier by the knowledge of the unfeigned love of countless friends. Walt Whitman, who saw him in the last months of his life, describes his "good colour in his face, eyes clear, with the well-known expression of sweetness, and the old, clear-peering aspect quite the same . . . and just the amount of talking that best suited, namely, a word or short phrase only where needed, and almost always with a smile".

A cold which attacked Emerson in the early spring of 1882 developed into pneumonia; and after a few days' illness he died on 27th April, barely a month after he had stood bareheaded by the open grave of his friend Longfellow.

to accept my best acknowledgments

With good wishes for the success of this good undertaking, I remain

Yours truly

Henry W. Longfellow

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

Facsimile of a page of a Private Letter, dated "Cambridge, 1st Feb., 1864". Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 33,964, f. 457.) [Face page 271.

XXI.

LONGFELLOW.

"IT is the prerogative of a poet," Longfellow once said to a friend, "to give pleasure." It would be difficult to point to any poet who, by his life as well as his work, gave more pleasure to his fellow-men than he. The sympathy and simplicity of his verse endeared it to thousands who would have been insensible to mere lyrical beauty, just as his modest and affectionate nature endeared the poet himself to every one. If he never rose to the greatest heights in poetry, he had at least the gift of direct appeal to the great mass of the reading public; and he achieved a popularity which was as honourable as it was widespread, inasmuch as he never allowed success to spoil his sincerity or tempt him to careless work. It is true that sentiment held a somewhat dangerous empire in his mind; but if this was a source of weakness from the literary point of view, it created a bond between him and his readers by virtue of its being the unaffected expression of the poet's personality.

He came of a stock in no way distinguished, but enviably sound; a race descended on both sides from sturdy Yorkshire emigrants, and shaped in a generation or two into useful New England citizens. His father was a prosperous lawyer at Portland, Maine,

where the future poet was born on 27th February, 1807.

There is not much to tell of his childhood, save that he seems to have been a rather precociously good little boy, very studious, and inclined to shrink from boyish games. When he was six years old his "schoolmarm" sent home the report that "Master Henry Longfellow is one of the best boys we have in school. He spells and reads very well. He can also add and multiply numbers. His conduct last quarter was very correct, and amiable." He had the quick temper of most sensitive children, and was extremely neat and orderly. Notwithstanding his love for poring over books, he was not without a boy's proper high spirits, as we learn from a reassuring mention of his "wearing his arm in a sling, having lamed his elbow in turning a somersault coming out of school". One of his school-fellows said in after life that he remembered Longfellow as "a very handsome boy," one who had "no relish for rude sports, but loved much better to lie under a tree and read; a thoughtful, but certainly not a melancholy boy".

In September 1822 Longfellow, "a tall, slender, blue-eyed, brown-haired lad" of fifteen, was sent with his elder brother to Bowdoin College, a newly endowed college at Brunswick, Maine, of which his father was a trustee. Amongst Longfellow's classmates at Bowdoin was Nathaniel Hawthorne, as well as several others who afterwards became men of more or less repute as politicians and ministers of religion. If the account given by Hawthorne of the life there is not unduly coloured by affectionate remembrance, this modest college represented some of the best features of the Puritan community. If, says Hawthorne, this institu-

tion could not offer all the advantages of "elder and prouder seminaries," it fostered regular habits and a deep sense of religion among the students. "The mild and gentle rule was more destructive to vice than a sterner sway; and, though youth is never without its follies, they have seldom been more harmless than they were here."

Longfellow was as studious at Bowdoin as he was at school, and his conduct as irreproachable. All the descriptions we have of his student days agree as to the happiness of his temperament, which "appeared to make it easy for him to avoid the unworthy". His charm of manner made him popular, although he was never much inclined to conviviality and was slow in forming new friendships. His letters to his father and mother show how appreciatively he was widening the range of his reading, and, incidentally, are evidence of the complete sympathy and confidence that existed between him and his parents.

When the time for his graduation arrived, in 1825, his father wrote representing to him that the question of his future career must be faced. He would have had his son follow in his steps as a lawyer; but Longfellow, who had been contributing verses to the local press, and was bitten with the desire of a literary life, replied with an earnest request that the idea of the law might be abandoned. He proposed to his father that he should spend a year at Cambridge "for the purpose of reading history and of becoming familiar with the best authors in polite literature"; after which he would "attach himself to some literary periodical publication, by which he could maintain himself and still enjoy the advantages of reading". When the *American Monthly Magazine* and the *United States Liter-*

ary Gazette accepted and praised his contributions, he had an additional argument with which to lay siege to his father's good nature; and eventually a compromise was effected, by which the boy undertook, if he were allowed his year at Cambridge, to turn his attention to the law at the end of it unless literature had in the meantime disclosed any more favourable prospect.

At this point, however, opportunity came from a most unexpected quarter. A Professorship of Modern Languages had just been established at Bowdoin College, but no professor yet appointed. One of the trustees, who was impressed by the promise of literary ability shown by Longfellow, warmly recommended him for the post and procured his appointment to it. This was, to the great delight of the young professor-elect, coupled with the proviso that he should first proceed to Europe, and stay there for some time, in order to gain the necessary familiarity with modern languages. In the spring of 1826 he started on his travels, full of enthusiastic anticipation of his new experiences, of plans for hard work, and of determination to fit himself for the life of a man of letters. With the exception of Washington Irving and Fenimore Cooper, there were as yet no writers in America that were known beyond its shores. Longfellow was conscious of the obvious opportunity, and resolved to make use of it.

After eight months in France (the greater part of the time in Paris) he felt himself sufficiently secure in the French language to write to his parents that he was on the point of leaving for Spain. Nine months in Spain were followed by a year in Italy and six months in Germany; and in August 1829 Longfellow returned

home, to be duly installed in his professorial chair a month later. The letters he wrote home during his tour are just such as might be expected from a clever and observant youth. He took his travels very seriously, and enjoyed them none the less on that account. "I should really be disposed," he wrote just a year after leaving home, "to quarrel with old Time for shifting so rapidly the scenes of life's little drama, were it not that he promises me that each succeeding one shall be brighter than the last." He contrived to see a good deal of the social life of the countries he visited, and constantly expressed his sense of the broadening influence that these new impressions were exercising on his mind.

He made a successful professor. His enthusiasm communicated itself to his pupils, and his courteous and attentive manner won their confidence. Not content with an assiduous discharge of his duties, he found leisure to edit one or two text-books for the use of the students, and also to write articles (mainly upon foreign literature) for the *North American Review*, to which he had received a flattering invitation to contribute.

In September 1831 he married Mary Storer Potter, a beautiful girl, the daughter of an old friend of his father's, and was unreservedly happy with her during their brief wedded life. Having "found his feet" in his new career, he began to be a little impatient of the limitations of the small college at Brunswick. "I now feel a strong desire," he wrote to a friend in 1832, "to tread a stage on which I can take longer strides and speak to a larger audience." He had various schemes in mind, but none proved practicable, until in December 1834 he was gratified by the offer of a similar professorship at Harvard University, in succession to

Professor Ticknor. The offer of the appointment carried with it the suggestion that Longfellow should take another year in Europe before entering upon his duties, and to this he agreed. In April 1835 he sailed for Europe with his wife, and spent some eighteen months travelling in Sweden, Holland, Germany and Switzerland.

Before he started he published *Outre-Mer*, his first original work. This consisted of a series of descriptive chapters (avowedly modelled upon Washington Irving's *Sketch Book*) founded upon his earlier travels in Europe. The book is pleasantly written, and its descriptions covered ground that was to a great extent unfamiliar at the time of its appearance. To this last fact it no doubt owed a good deal of the popularity it achieved.

Six months after their landing in Europe, his wife fell ill in Rotterdam, and, to his great grief, died there in November 1835, "closing her peaceful life by a still more peaceful death," as he wrote to his father. He "buried himself in old dusty books," to endeavour to deaden the wound his wife's loss had made, and lived out a lonely winter and spring in Heidelberg. The summer was spent in Switzerland and the Tyrol; and though at first we find him writing in his journal, "What a solitary, lonely being I am! Why do I travel? Every hour my heart aches," or again, "Every friend seems to keep out of my path, and the world seems so lonely," his sadness became by degrees lightened by the beauty of the scenes in which he found himself, and the companionship of acquaintances made as he travelled. Before very long there appears frequently in the journal the names of Mr. Appleton and his family, Bostonians who were travelling in Switzerland. They were attracted to Longfellow, who

was grateful for their society, and was constantly in the company of Mr. Appleton or his daughter Frances, a strikingly pretty girl of twenty. For the present Longfellow's thoughts went no farther than ordinary friendship, but the impression made on him by Miss Appleton was deeper, as events proved, than he perhaps imagined at the time.

He entered upon his professorship at Harvard in December 1836. His rooms, after the first few months, were in Craigie House, a house in Cambridge that was already famous as having been for a time the residence of Washington. It was Longfellow's home for the rest of his life. He became at once extremely popular, both in collegiate circles in Cambridge, and in the wider society of Boston. "There is such a social spirit here and in Boston that I seldom see a book by candle-light," he writes to his father in 1837. His lectures, he says, are a source of pleasure to him, and his audience "sit motionless and attentive for nearly an hour".

Fortified by the pleasant sense of security that his position gave, he felt justified in giving rein to the poetic instinct that had been simmering within him. From chance entries in his journal we can see the working of this. For instance, such similes as the following, which relates to a journey on foot to Boston: "I always stop on the bridge; tide-waters are beautiful. From the ocean up into the land they go, like messengers, to ask why the tribute has not been paid. The brooks and rivers answer that there has been little harvest of snow and rain this year." He contributed a number of short poems about this time to the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, notably one called "The Psalm of Life" (first printed in June 1838), which was quoted and copied to an extent that now seems far more surprising than it was at the

time. Poetry expressive of a moral truth, or encouraging to a moral end, was something new in American letters; and the simple metaphor of "The Psalm of Life" appealed with peculiar force to the heart of a people unaccustomed to have its best aspirations so vividly urged in verse. The notice this piece attracted led to Longfellow's publication, in 1839, of his first volume of poems, *Voices of the Night*. The book won a complete success. "You do not know," he wrote to his father in December 1839, "how grandly my 'Voices' has succeeded. . . . Only forty copies left on hand out of 900 printed, and it is hardly a fortnight since the publication."

Meantime a work which, for peculiar reasons, was nearer to his heart, had been finished. This was *Hyperion*, a prose romance which not only included much that was autobiographical, but presented, under a thin disguise of fiction, a picture of his thoughts and emotions during his Swiss travels of three years before. There would have been nothing remarkable in this had he not chosen to make the romance a deliberate instrument of wooing the fair Frances Appleton, who seems to have haunted his mind ever since they were together in Switzerland. If the author was recognisable in his hero, Miss Appleton and her father were equally unmistakeably portrayed in two of the other characters in the book, and the hero's rhapsodies were made very plainly to express Longfellow's own feelings. That Miss Appleton should have taken offence at this very public wooing was not surprising; especially as *Hyperion*, for intrinsic reasons, attracted a great deal of attention. "It excites very strong and opposite feelings," Longfellow wrote to his father in September 1839; "some praise and others condemn in no measured terms, and

the book sells with a rapidity far beyond my expectations." Miss Appleton's indignation lasted for some time, but eventually gave way before the frank devotion of the handsome young professor ; and four years later she gladly married him.

The success of *Voices of the Night* encouraged Longfellow's poetic inclinations, and his journal begins to hold frequent entries respecting poems planned or written. "I have broken ground in a new field;" he writes late in 1839, "namely, ballads ; beginning with the *Wreck of the Schooner 'Hesperus'*. . . . I think I shall write more. The national ballad is a virgin soil here in New England, and there are great materials." The *Wreck of the "Hesperus,"* which appeared in the *New World* early in 1840, was warmly praised, and formed the nucleus of a volume of *Ballads, and Other Poems* published in the following year. In this "Excelsior" and "The Village Blacksmith" first saw the light.

His next publication was his *Poems on Slavery*, which he had written on ship-board when returning from a short trip to Europe in 1842. His health had been indifferent, and change and rest ordered him. He spent some days, when in England, with Dickens, to whom he had shown some hospitality in America earlier in the year. Not long after his return his marriage to Miss Appleton took place. She was a woman of exceptionally fine nature, and this marriage crowned the growing happiness of his life.

It was now evident to him that his fame was to be a poet's. For nearly twenty years his life went on tranquilly and happily at the Craigie House, where he had had his bachelor rooms. The house and estate had been bought for him by Mr. Appleton at his marriage ; and here Longfellow became the loved centre of a society

that included all the best minds of his day. He had everything to make him happy, at home and abroad. Every one was his friend ; none ever found anything in him but perfect kindness and courtesy ; and he was to the end of his life accessible to strangers, and tolerant of their importunities, to an extraordinary degree.

In 1846 *The Belfry of Bruges, and Other Poems*, which included "The Arrow and the Song," appeared ; and this was followed, in 1847, by *Evangeline*, the finest of his poems, and the work which set the final seal on his reputation. The pathos of the subject and its national interest, combined with the dignified simplicity of its language and the skill with which an unfamiliar metre was handled, gained it an immediate appreciation which has only grown with the lapse of years. The choice of hexameters for the metre of an English poem was daring ; but the rhythm seems to suit the quiet beauty of the Acadian scenes the poem describes, and the sadness of its story. To those who maintained, when he proposed setting about the task, that English hexameters were impossible, Longfellow delighted in pointing out the frequency with which they occur in the Bible—in such splendid passages as : "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet".

After *The Seaside and the Fireside* (1850), which contains "The Building of the Ship," came *The Golden Legend* in 1851, and, four years later, *Hiawatha*—probably the best known, but by no means the best, of Longfellow's poems. He is said to have undertaken both *Evangeline* and *Hiawatha* as a reply to criticisms which had complained of his poems having no sufficient "smell of the American soil". Despite the novelty of the *Evangeline* metre, *Hiawatha* was a bolder experiment in subject as well as metre, and it cannot be

claimed for it that it was as successful in either respect. The subject, though picturesque, makes less appeal to the emotions, and the interest is obscured by the mass of detail ; the metre, copied from that of the "Kalevala," the epic of Finland, becomes wearisome from its facile monotony. From Longfellow's journal we learn that on the appearance of the poem some of the newspapers were "fierce and furious," reminding him of the days when *Hyperion* first appeared ; others "stirred the minds of readers a little by sundry squibs and the like, imitations of the metre".

Longfellow made a further experiment with hexameters in *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, published in 1858. Most of his best poems about this time, and for nearly twenty years to come, appeared first in the *Atlantic Monthly Magazine*—a periodical with whose inception Longfellow was intimately concerned, in company with Emerson, Holmes, Lowell, and other prominent American men of letters.

He had resigned his professorship (in which he was succeeded by Lowell) in 1854. This left him free to a purely literary activity. One of his biographers describes him as being now "indubitably the handsomest, wealthiest, kindliest, best-mannered author in America ; and he was also the most popular author". He was, too, one of the happiest men in America till a terrible disaster overtook him in 1861. His dearly loved wife was burnt to death before his eyes. A burning match, which she had let fall, set her light summer dress ablaze. Hearing her screams, Longfellow rushed into the room, only in time to snatch up a rug and wrap it round her as she fell mortally hurt. When she was buried three days later, on the anniversary of their marriage day, he was unable to

be present owing to the severity with which he had himself been burned in his attempt to save her.

Though he lived for twenty years after this tragedy, he never recovered from the blow. To all but his most intimate friends he was apparently calm and resigned ; even to these he would scarcely ever allude to the memories which filled his mind. "I have no heart for anything. There is only one thought in my mind ; you know what that is," he wrote to one of them. Again, in his journal : "Everything without is full of loveliness. But within me the hunger, the famine of the heart!"

By degrees he found solace in his work. At first, to compel himself to a change of thought, he set to work upon a translation of Dante ; eventually he came again to take a pleasure in writing verses of his own. Once the inclination revived, he eagerly busied himself with his poetry. *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, *Flower-de-Luce*, and the *New England Tragedies* had all been published before, in 1868, he set out for his last visit to Europe. He spent part of the time in England, everywhere received with signal marks of honour. Both Oxford and Cambridge Universities conferred honorary degrees upon him ; the Queen received him at Windsor, and the Prince of Wales in London ; while notabilities of every degree struggled for his company. A contemporary account of the academic proceedings at Cambridge describes the picturesque effect of his appearance in the red robes of an LL.D., their colour contrasting with his "long, white, silken hair, and beard of patriarchal whiteness, enclosing a fresh-coloured countenance, with fine-cut features and deep-sunken eyes overshadowed by massive eyebrows".

September of 1869 found him home again at the

Craigie House, glad of its peaceful beauty, though that had now always a tinge of sadness in it for him. "Paid my taxes, which gives one a home feeling," he writes in his journal on 13th September.

The last twelve years of his life passed quietly, and to a great extent happily. Though distracted by the claims made upon his time by countless friends as well as by strangers, he worked steadily till near the close of his life, and produced a considerable amount of verse in these last years. *The Divine Tragedy*, which, with *The Golden Legend* and *New England Tragedies*, completed the trilogy afterwards issued as *Christus*, appeared in 1872. This was followed by *Three Books of Song* in 1872, *Aftermath* in 1873, *The Hanging of the Crane* in 1874, *The Masque of Pandora* in 1875, *Kéramos* in 1878, and *Ultima Thule* in 1880.

On his seventy-second birthday, in 1879, he was delighted by the gift, from the children of Cambridge, of an arm-chair made from the chestnut tree under which had stood the "village smithy" that had inspired his well-known poem nearly forty years before.

He was ill for some little while in the autumn of 1881, but the attack passed off. In the following spring, however, a chill prostrated him, and after a week of painful illness he died quietly on 24th March, 1882. He was buried in the Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge; "a sweet and beautiful nature," as the aged Emerson said of him as he stood by his grave.

XXII.

THACKERAY.

To a chance remark of Thackeray's, and a somewhat overstrained filial reverence for the letter of his wishes, we owe the fact that no exhaustive biography of him was written by a contemporary, or by any one who knew him well enough to record the countless details that go to make up our knowledge of a man's personality. The result is that most readers of Thackeray have but the vaguest idea of what manner of man he was. The great majority of them, from pure ignorance, set him down as a cynic, in which they are wrong; while the remainder are puzzled by a character only very partially explained by the little they know of the man. There are, it is true, two short sketches written by men who knew him—Anthony Trollope and Herman Merivale. The former's is a conscientious attempt to be just to a character the writer did not really understand. Trollope's preciseness can only see idleness and lack of method in Thackeray's somewhat spasmodic style of working, and accuses him of never being able to "put his best foot foremost". Merivale's sketch is more sympathetic, perhaps dangerously so, but it does not go far enough. Both writers, however, do Thackeray justice in pointing out the essential kindliness of his nature, and in emphasising the fact that a man may be a satirist without being a cynic.

Tuesday also formed two of the names of 2, 1 at Covent Garden & one at Drury Lane that is on the same Tuesday evening and no other Miss's benefit on a Tuesday during the season. The Miss Poyntz I think is one of the names, but I'm 5 miles from the book as I write to you, and forget the Lady's name of the day.

However on the day Sterne was writing to Lady P., and going to Miss —'s benefit he is dying in his Journal to the Brahmin cant cat, has the doctor, and is in a dreadful way. He wasn't dying but lying I'm afraid - God help him - a false and wicked man, as difficult to rout of - do you know Sterne's

the accompanying pamphlet (my friend Mr. Cooper gave me their copy, wh he had previously sent to the Reform Club, and has since given the Club another Copy) - there is more of Yorick's love making in these letters, with blasphemy to flavor the compositions, and indications of a scornful unbelief: of course any man is welcome to believe as he likes for me except a parson: and I look upon Swift & Sterne as a couple of traitors and renegades (as one does upon Burke and a poor Beau the other day) with a scornful pity for them in spite of all their genius and greatness.

With many thanks for your loan believe me dear Sir

Very faithfully yours

W. M. Thackeray.

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY.

Facsimile of a Letter to T. W. Gibbs, commenting on [illegible] Letters, etc. (Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 34,827, f. 75.)

[Face page 284.

Thackeray was abnormally sensitive. This gave him an almost painfully clear insight into the follies and weaknesses of life, which he unsparingly attacked. But with this sensitiveness there was the compensation of a vivid sympathy, which prevented cynicism. He would unmercifully ridicule a folly, but the next minute would go out of his way to help its perpetrator if he were in distress. His intelligence led him one way, and his heart another. The promptings of his heart were naturally only known to his intimate friends, while the workings of his intelligence were every one's property ; hence it was not surprising that many formed an opinion of him that was very wide of the mark.

He was born at Calcutta, on 18th July 1811. On both his father's and his mother's side he came of a race of "Indian Civilians". When he was five years old his father died, and his mother, a widow of only four-and-twenty, sent him to England, where he was taken charge of by his aunt, Mrs. Ritchie. An anecdote describes Mrs. Ritchie as being alarmed at the size of the boy's head, and taking him in consequence to see a doctor, who only laughed at her for her pains, saying : "He has a large head, but there is a good deal in it". He was a healthy, unprecocious little boy, with nothing to mark him as different from the other "many good boys" that (as he wrote to his mother) he found to pläy with at Chiswick, where his aunt lived. "I hope Captain Smyth is well ; give my love to him, and tell him he must bring you home to your affectionate little son, William Thackeray," the letter ends. Captain Smyth, of whom Thackeray was very fond, soon afterwards became his step-father.

When the boy was only eleven, he was sent to Charterhouse to school, and spent six unhappy years

there. The rough discipline and still rougher life appeared worse to his sensitive, home-loving disposition than perhaps they really were; at any rate, he was unfeignedly thankful when his school days were over. He had little taste for games, and was too shy to make many friends, "a pretty, gentle and rather timid boy," as one of his school-fellows afterwards said he recollected him. Before he left school he had a certain reputation among the boys as a maker of verse parodies. More remarkable was his taste for drawing. His school books were profusely illustrated with comic sketches, no uncommon thing with school books; but Thackeray's sketches were already full of character.

Early in 1829 he went up to Trinity College, Cambridge. He only spent about a year and a half at Cambridge, and left it without attempting to take a degree. Dr. Thompson (afterwards master of Trinity), who was a contemporary of Thackeray's at College, and a fellow-member of a "small literary society" got up by a group of undergraduates, describes him as leading "a somewhat lazy but pleasant and 'gentleman-like' life". He remembered Thackeray as, in those days, "a tall, thin, large-eyed, full and ruddy-faced man with an eye-glass fixed *en permanence*".

To judge by the "journal" which Thackeray wrote to his mother from his schoolboy days, he was not idle at Cambridge, though he thoroughly enjoyed his life there and the agreeable change from the miseries of the Charterhouse. He gives his mother, with some enthusiasm, an account of what he is reading, as well as a chronicle of his dinners, suppers and teas, his walks and sketching excursions, his fishing and his fencing. In his first year he contributed to a short-lived university paper, *The Snob*, a burlesque poem on the subject

of the prize poem for the year. This was *Timbuctoo*, and the prize poem was Tennyson's. Thackeray possibly also had a hand in *The Gownsman*, a successor to *The Snob*. Tennyson was amongst his friends at college, as also were Edward Fitzgerald, Henry Alford, John Sterling, and several others whose names afterwards came before the world in various connections.

When he left Cambridge in the autumn of 1830, to complete his education by making the customary "grand tour" on the Continent, he had small private means, perhaps some £500 a year. At Cambridge he had formed his tastes, made friendships, and stored his mind with new ideas; and with these advantages, added to the fortunate possession of the best of health, he set out eagerly upon his travels.

A short stay in the Rhine district was followed by a visit to Weimar, where Thackeray had the gratification of being received by Goethe, then an old man of eighty-three, who seemed to take a decided fancy to the clever young Englishman. The "grand tour" was, after all, confined to Germany. The literary and social attractions of Weimar caused Thackeray to linger there until the studious atmosphere of the place reminded him that he must think of a profession for himself. He decided upon the Law—not because he had any particular bent that way, but because it seemed to him to be "a noble and tangible object, an honourable profession," and in some measure to offer a prospect of fame. He returned to London in 1831, and settled in chambers in the Temple.

He read his law books more or less diligently, but with little relish. "This lawyer's preparatory education," he says in his diary, "is certainly one of the most cold-blooded, prejudiced pieces of invention that ever

a man was slave to. . . . Never mind, I am beginning to find out that people are much wiser than I am (which is a rare piece of modesty in me)." At the same time he laments that the sun will not shine into his chambers. "I do so long for fresh air—and fresh butter, I would say, only it isn't romantic."

He inherited the capital of his fortune in 1832, when he came of age, and lost it in two years, partly through the collapse of an Indian bank, partly through the failure of two newspapers in which he was sufficiently ill-advised to adventure. The only useful result of his journalistic connection was that it gave him the possibility of an opening when he turned to his pen as a means of earning a livelihood. After a brief experience of life in Paris, where he went with the view of studying art, the profession nearest his heart, he returned to London.

By degrees he rose in the ranks of "outside contributors" until he reached a definite position on the staff of *Fraser's Magazine*, the cradle of so many literary lives. Even then he had a hard struggle to earn an income, for his recognition as a writer came slowly. He was still doubtful whether literature or art was the more promising profession for him, and had hopes of success as an illustrator and caricaturist. He proposed to illustrate *Pickwick*, which had, in 1836, begun to appear in monthly numbers, but his drawings were not found suitable.

In the midst of miscellaneous contributions, about this time, to various periodicals, he made his first successes in humorous fiction in the pages of *Fraser*, with *The Great Hoggarty Diamond*—as entertaining a work as he ever wrote—and the *Yellowplush* papers. Even then his ability was not much recognised beyond

his immediate circle of literary colleagues ; and such recognition was becoming more and more essential, as he had added to his responsibilities by taking a wife. In August 1836 he married Miss Isabella Shawe.

For nearly four years he was completely happy in his married life, in spite of the pinch of means, until a terrible calamity overtook the young couple. After the birth of her third child, in 1840, Mrs. Thackeray's health gave way, and her illness took the distressing form of mental incapacity. This reached a stage when it became necessary to put her under proper care, and the household in London was broken up. His two little girls (the second had died in infancy) were sent by Thackeray into the charge of his mother, who was settled in Paris ; and he went back to his lonely bachelor life. For the rest of his days he was, as Trollope says, "as it were a widower". He had been deeply devoted to his wife, and nothing ever compensated him for her loss. As his children grew up, he was never tired of telling them of the patience and gentleness of their mother's character.

He was obliged to work very hard for some time without any very great pecuniary result. *Fraser* and the *New Monthly Magazine* were what he chiefly relied on as a source of income until, about the year 1840, his connection with *Punch* began—a connection, as has been said, fortunate for *Punch*, for Thackeray and for the world. He made use of his Parisian experiences in the *Paris Sketch Book*, which he published in 1840, and followed up, three years later, with the *Irish Sketch Book*, the result of a tour in Ireland in 1842. *Barry Lyndon* ran as a serial in *Fraser* during 1844, and in 1846 there began in *Punch* the inimitable series of papers known in collected form as the *Book of Snobs*.

In the latter year there also appeared a third gossiping "travel book," written after a short trip that Thackeray made to the East as the guest of some friends. This he called *From Cornhill to Grand Cairo.*

As yet, however, his name was but little known outside of a limited circle, and Thackeray, half-humorously and half in earnest, used to express his envy of Dickens' rapid success. *Pickwick* was ten years old by this time, and *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Barnaby Rudge* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* had already helped to secure their author's hold upon the affections of his public. During these ten years Thackeray had worked as hard as Dickens, and produced work as good, if not as popular, as he; but he had yet to make his mark. He took a useful hint from Dickens' practice of publishing his novels in parts—a plan which combined the advantages of giving the author time and stimulating the curiosity of the public. In Thackeray's case it was a little apt to lead to procrastination, and to his discovering that the next publishing day was at hand and his "part" not written; but he was not one who could compel his invention to wait on him regularly for so many hours a day, and, when it came to the point, he never failed to keep his faith with his readers.

In monthly parts, then, *Vanity Fair* appeared, between January 1847 and July 1848. Thackeray had been determined to make a serious effort to establish himself in a secure position, and was not unconfident of his ability to do so. "I think if I can make a push at the present minute," he wrote to a friend just as *Vanity Fair* was appearing, "I may go up with a run to a pretty fair place in my trade, and be allowed to appear before the public among the first fiddles. But my tunes must be heard in the streets, and organs must

grind them." He realised that he must no longer affect an indifference to popularity, and that it was the approbation of the great general public that had set Dickens where he was. "Happy Dickens!" he says wistfully, "but I love Pickwick and Crummles too much to abuse this great man." In the letter referred to above, he tells his friend that hitherto he has never cared what the world thought of his work, but that the truth is forcing itself upon him that, if the world would once take to admiring him, all his guineas would be multiplied by ten; and, as he has children, "guineas are good".

Vanity Fair conquered the public at once; the guineas began to roll in with agreeable frequency, and Thackeray became as widely talked about as Dickens. In 1848 the *Edinburgh Review* contained an article dealing with Thackeray's earlier works, on the strength of his present fame, thus conclusively setting a seal to that. He was a social success, too. We hear of him being invited to Holland House and Devonshire House, dining at Sir Robert Peel's or with the Royal Academy, and everywhere popular from the kindliness that accompanied his wit.

The last number of *Vanity Fair* had been but a short time out when the first of *Pendennis* appeared. This met with equal success, and had additional interest (for those who were in the secret) from the fact that the chapters dealing with the youth of Arthur Pendennis were admittedly autobiographical. "I begin to like him considerably," Thackeray wrote to a friend while he was engaged on the book; "I wonder whether he is interesting to me for selfish reasons, and because I fancy we resemble each other in many points, or whether I can get the public to like him too."

One of the pleasantest features of Thackeray's success is his frank admiration for the charm of Dickens, whose direct appeal to the emotions found an immediate answer in his sensitive and affectionate disposition. *David Copperfield* was appearing at the same time as *Pendennis*—the former in parts bound in green paper, the latter in yellow. "Get *David Copperfield*," writes Thackeray to his friend Mrs. Brookfield, "by Jingo, it's beautiful; it beats the yellow chap of this month hollow!" Again, "Have you read Dickens? Oh! it is charming. Brave Dickens!" This ungrudging admiration is the more valuable when we recollect that it came from a man who was perpetually nervous as to the result of his own work—not from diffidence, for he knew the quality of what he wrote, but from sheer sensitiveness. If he loved to be praised, it was more for the comfort he gained from the assurance that he had succeeded than from any sense of vanity.

All this time (up to about the year 1850) he was a prolific contributor to *Punch*. *Mr. Punch's Prize Novelists*, which are some of the most amusing parodies in the language, appeared during the same months as *Vanity Fair*; and, a year before, *Punch* had printed the immortal *Jeames's Diary*.

Thackeray's daughters were now growing up, and he was becoming uneasy (as an attempt, fortunately unsuccessful, to obtain a post in a Government office shows) as to a future provision for them. The novels were an undoubted success, but the money they brought vanished almost as quickly as it came, for Thackeray was unmethodical in money matters and open-handed to a fault. After much hesitation he resolved to try his hand at lecturing, and wrote a set of lectures on *The English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century*. These

were delivered at Willis's Rooms in 1851, and afterwards in various towns in the kingdom, including Oxford and Cambridge. Though, when it came to the point, Thackeray seemed quite at his ease with his audience and the lectures were completely successful, he was in a terrible state of nervousness before making the plunge. Mrs. Kemble relates that he told her he was so nervous about it that he was afraid he would break down. He was harassed not only by the fear of failing to master his audience, but also by the doubt as to whether the fact of his coming before the public as a lecturer would injure his position as an author. Happily his fears proved unfounded. The lectures delighted his audiences, and their success only made his public more eager to welcome his books. Charlotte Brontë, who heard them, describes them as "a sort of essays, characterised by his own peculiar originality and power, and delivered with a finished taste and ease, which is felt but cannot be described".

The lectures were delivered in the summer of 1851, and in the autumn of the same year Thackeray sailed for Boston, in the hope of repeating his success there, and gaining "dollars, not for myself, but for my little girls at home," as he said. Before he started he had finished *Esmond*, which was published early in 1852. This work, which in after life he very justly rated above anything else he had written, met with little recognition at first. Why this was so it is difficult to understand. As a story, it is interesting, and more of a coherent whole than any other of his novels, while in the matter of workmanship it is, as Trollope points out, something of a *tour de force*. Thackeray seems to have so steeped himself in the spirit of the age of which he was writing that the language of the time is used as if it were that

to which the author had been born. It is one of the few historical novels in existence where archaic forms of speech do not seem merely curiosities or affectations ; we live in the time of Queen Anne as we read it, and the speech, which we know from our remembrance of Swift or Addison is that of their day, sounds as naturally in *Esmond* as that of yesterday does in *Vanity Fair*. Whatever may be individual opinion as to the course of the story—Thackeray himself declared that Esmond and Lady Castlewood married in spite of him !—no one can deny the masterly manner in which its characters are drawn and the reality with which they impress the reader.

The American tour proved pleasant and profitable, and Thackeray wrote home that he liked the people more than he expected and was "none the worse pleased because everybody has read all my books and praises my lectures". He came home to publish *The Newcomes*, a novel which must rank on the same high level with *Esmond* and *Vanity Fair*. It has to some extent the autobiographical interest that was so marked a feature of *Pendennis*, to which it is a sort of sequel. In style it is more like *Vanity Fair*, by reason of its persistent satire. It came out in parts, between October 1853 and August 1855 ; and almost as soon as it was off his hands Thackeray set about planning a new course of lectures which should be first of all delivered to his appreciative public in America. He had been delighted with his success there. "By Jove, how kind you all were to me," he wrote to one of his Philadelphia hosts after his return ; and we are told of the "uproarious dancing and shouting" in which he indulged in Boston when he was told that the tickets for his first course of lectures there had all been sold.

In the course of a Christmas spent in Rome in 1854 he wrote *The Rose and the Ring*, one of the best burlesques in existence, for the amusement of a group of children. It was, like many of his works, illustrated by his own drawings; and a touching description is given by his daughter of his carrying the sketches, as he drew them, to a little sick maiden, who, "starting up eagerly, and tossing back her thick hair, would stretch out her hot hand for the pages".

After a "send-off" dinner at the London Tavern, at which Dickens took the chair, he started again for America in October 1855. His lectures this time were on the "Four Georges". They proved even more attractive than the former course; and immediately on his return home in the following spring he received a flattering proposal, from an English agency, that he should repeat them in many of the principal towns here. His letters from America to his daughters are written in the highest spirits, a happiness due, we may be sure, mainly to the thought that he is laying by a substantial income for the future of his "little girls". His first letter is to tell them how he is "comfortably settled with 100 kind people to make your papa welcome, and 2,000 every night to come and hear his lectures".

It is difficult to understand what it was that led Thackeray to try and enter Parliament. He had his full share of ambition, but his literary fame was more than enough to satisfy that. It is possible that it was due to the restlessness of disposition which, ever since the breakdown of his wife's mental health, accompanied his endeavour to deaden or conceal his perpetual grief for his "poor little woman". Be that as it may, it is at all events probable that literature was

the gainer by his being defeated at the poll when he stood for the City of Oxford in 1857. He accepted his defeat with a good grace, and, in the words of his speech after the declaration of the poll, retired to take his place with his pen and ink at his desk, and left to his opponent a business which that gentleman understood better than he.

He was soon at work on a new book, and in the winter of the same year there appeared the first part of *The Virginians*, a story which deals with the fortunes of two brothers descended from the Colonel Esmond of the earlier novel. This completed, he found himself, in 1859, in the thick of preparations for the launching of the *Cornhill Magazine*, of which he was to be editor, with a staff chosen from among the cleverest writers of the day. He was editor for a little more than two years, during which time his *Lovel the Widower* and *The Adventures of Philip* appeared in the magazine, as well as a delightful series of desultory essays which he republished in 1863 as the *Roundabout Papers*. He never cared much for his editorial task. The drudgery was unwelcome, and his kind heart was continually wrung by the necessity of refusing contributions sent by presumably needy scribes. It is, indeed, to be suspected that more than one such contribution was paid for out of his own private purse, and the MS. discreetly relegated to the waste-paper basket, rather than that he should be compelled to inflict pain or disappointment.

He gave up the editorship of *Cornhill* in March 1862. His health had for some time been far from good ; he had lately been subject to intermittent feverish attacks of which he had courageously made light, so much so that even his intimate friends hardly realised his condition, though they were aware of his having suffered.

His death was very sudden. Early on the morning of 24th December 1863 his doctor was summoned to his house, but only arrived to find him lying dead. A few days later he was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, in the presence of a vast crowd who were as dearly bound to him by personal affection as by the claim of his greatness.

XXIII.

DICKENS.

IN 1824, when Thackeray was at school at the Charterhouse, a small sickly-looking boy of twelve, who had hardly known any schooling, was tying up and labelling blacking-bottles in a factory in Covent Garden; working with such industrious fingers that amused passers-by used to stop in the street and watch him through the window; sleeping at night by himself in a garret, because his father was in the debtor's prison at the Marshalsea; and contriving in some way to feed and provide for himself on the scanty wages of six shillings a week. This "very queer small boy," as he afterwards described himself, was the future author of *Pickwick* and *David Copperfield.*

Charles Dickens (he was christened "Charles John Huffham;" but never used the last two names) was born in a suburb of Portsea on 7th February, 1812. His father was then a Government clerk employed in the Portsmouth Dockyard, but was removed to Chatham when the boy was four years old. At Chatham the little Charles spent five or six years of childhood, the only years of his early days in which he knew anything but hardship and struggle. As it was, it was no very comfortable life. He was one of eight children, his father was getting every year deeper in debt, and his mother seems to have been a particularly useless

Gads Hill Place.
Higham by Rochester, Kent.

Wednesday Eight June 1870

My dear Kent.

To-morrow is a very bad day for me to make a call, as, in addition to my usual office business, I have a mass of accounts to settle with Wills. But I hope I may be ready for you at 3 o'clock. If I can't be — why, then I shan't be.

You must really get rid of those Opal enjoyments. They are too overpowering:

"Those violent delights have violent ends"

I think it was a father Confessor who made the wise remark to a young gentleman who got up early (or stayed out late) at Verona.[2]

Ever affectionately

CD

CHARLES DICKENS.

Facsimile of a Letter, written the day before his death, to Charles Kent. (Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 31,022, f. 1.) [Face page 298.

person; so that from the first he only knew an atmosphere of parsimony and difficulty. He was not unhappy yet, however; for, though he was too delicate to care about the rough games of the humble school to which he was sent, the busy, shifting life of the dockyard town was an endless source of wonder; long rambles in the Kentish lanes delighted him; and, best of all, there was a "blessed little room" in his father's house where he found such companions as *Robinson Crusoe*, *Don Quixote*, *Tom Jones*, *Roderick Random*, and *The Vicar of Wakefield*, besides exciting books of travel and the ever-fascinating *Arabian Nights*, to transport him to strange and wonderful scenes.

His father's troubles thickened when he was transferred to London on a decreased salary, and the family was pursued by all the indignities and miseries that accompanied a perpetual endeavour to dodge creditors. Mrs. Dickens made a desperate endeavour to start a day school for girls, but with no success, in spite of the attractive circulars that the little Charles carried from door to door in their neighbourhood. One thing after another found its way to the pawnbroker's, generally by Charles' hands; even the precious store of books had to be given up to provide food and fire. At last the crash could no longer be avoided. His father was arrested for debt and carried off to the Marshalsea, where, almost with relief, he installed himself with his wife and the other children; while Charles, through the good nature of an acquaintance, was sent out into the world to earn a shilling a day by labelling blacking-pots.

It was hard discipline; doubly hard for a sensitive, imaginative child; but it was pluckily borne until his sense of humiliation, and still more the sense of being

completely neglected, made it unendurable, and he was driven with tears to appeal to his father—not so much to take him from the work, as to let him feel some relief from his utter isolation. "It is wonderful to me," he afterwards wrote, "how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age. . . . My father and mother were quite satisfied; they could hardly have been more so if I had been twenty years of age, distinguished at a Grammar School, and going to Cambridge." His father (the original, we are told, of "Mr. Micawber") was an improvident and rather ridiculous, but still an affectionate, man. He was touched by the child's unhappiness, once it was forced upon his notice, and did all that, at the time, he could for him; which consisted in taking an attic for him nearer the Marshalsea, and having him every day to breakfast in the prison and for such other spare time as the boy was allowed. Fortunately soon after this a small legacy enabled "Mr. Micawber" to obtain his discharge from the prison, and Charles was taken away from the blacking factory and sent to school.

Two years at a day school such as his father could afford did not, perhaps, teach Dickens very much; but it made a welcome break in his life, and helped to bring back much of his early boyish spirits. It is no mere figure of speech in his case to say that everyday life was his school—not so much in forming his character (indeed it was wonderful that his factory experience had done that no harm) as in stimulating and feeding his abnormal power of observation. His books show unmistakeably that even at this early age he saw and noted everything; and the hard life he had gone through, instead of breeding callousness, only resulted (thanks to an affectionate nature) in a life-long

sympathy with every form of trouble or oppression. The new school days were happy. His suppressed boyhood asserted itself; he grew stronger and his spirits higher; and he found untold delight in trying his hand at the invention of tales and plays for the delectation of his school-fellows, among whom this made him popular.

When he was fifteen all this came to an end, and he had to begin working again. This time it was as a solicitor's clerk, at a "salary" very little more than double what he had received in the blacking warehouse. He remained for eighteen months in a dingy office in Gray's Inn, picking up a little law and an extensive knowledge of the seamy side of legal life, until the fact of his father's having obtained employment as parliamentary reporter to a newspaper fired him with the ambition to try the same career. He set determinedly to work, taught himself shorthand, and spent all his spare time reading at the British Museum; for he wisely realised that, to be a successful reporter, he must have at least an inkling of various subjects which at present were mysteries to him. His persistence was rewarded. After an apprenticeship as reporter at Doctors' Commons, he was promoted to the reporting of parliamentary speeches, and for some five years obtained continual employment of this kind for various newspapers. The work was laborious, but it afforded him experiences of the most varied kind; and so thoroughly did he enter into it that when, as a happy consequence of success in another direction, he gave it up, he had won the reputation of being one of the best reporters in the kingdom.

Meanwhile he had not forgotten his dreams of winning fame with his pen. With a wisdom unusual

in a young author, he started by writing of what he knew. He had a considerable store of experience of a certain kind to draw upon, and a fund of native humour to illustrate it; and accordingly it was with descriptive papers of London life that he made his first essay in original writing. To his joy and pride he saw in print, in the number of the *Old Monthly Magazine* for 1st January, 1834, a paper which, as he tells us, he had "dropped stealthily one evening at twilight, with fear and trembling, into a dark letter-box, in a dark office, up a dark court in Fleet Street". The paper was called *A Dinner at Poplar Walk*, and was afterwards enshrined (under the name of *Mr. Minns and his Cousin*) in the *Sketches by Boz*.

He contributed altogether ten articles of this kind to the *Old Monthly*, and on the strength of them was invited to write some for the *Evening Chronicle*, an offshoot of the *Morning Chronicle* on whose staff he was as reporter. The *Chronicle* articles were paid for, which the former had not been; and Dickens had particular reason to welcome the addition to his reporter's salary, for, by the end of 1835, he was contemplating marriage. The papers attracted attention, and were a sufficient success to warrant their being reprinted in volume form; accordingly in 1836 there appeared the first volume of *Sketches by Boz*, followed by a second series the next year.

Meantime fortune had shown conclusively that she meant to smile upon Dickens. His "chance" came when, one day late in 1835, a member of the firm of Chapman & Hall called upon him with the request that he would write the letterpress to accompany a series of "Cockney sporting plates" that the caricaturist Seymour was drawing for the firm. Dickens

was naturally more than ready to accept the commission, but contrived, after some discussion, to get the original plan altered. His proposal, which was agreed to, was that he should write a series of humorous articles dealing with a club of Cockney sportsmen, whose adventures Seymour should illustrate. Out of this idea grew the immortal *Pickwick*. Dickens set to work upon it at once, and on 1st April, 1836, the first part appeared. The next day he was married to Catherine Hogarth, the daughter of one of his colleagues on the *Chronicle*.

The first four parts did not attract much attention; but in the fifth Sam Weller made his appearance, and all at once the whole town talked of *Pickwick*. The sudden rush of popularity was astounding. Four hundred copies had been printed of the first part; by the time the fifteenth was reached 40,000 were needed to supply the demand. The freshness of the book, its irrepressible high spirits, the popular quality of the humour—broad comedy of the best kind—and perhaps most of all the keen observation of life that showed through every line of its caricature, suited it to every one's taste. High and low were equally delighted; and long before the issue of the last part "Pickwickian" phrases were in every one's mouth, and its author at twenty-four was famous. Seymour only lived to illustrate the first part. For the rest, out of a number of applicants (of whom Thackeray was one) Hablot K. Browne, better known by his familiar signature of "Phiz," was chosen as illustrator.

Mr. Bentley, the publisher, had been one of the first to recognise Dickens' abilities, and in the early days of *Pickwick* engaged him to edit a new magazine (which appeared as *Bentley's Miscellany*) and to con-

tribute a new story to it. Accordingly, before *Pickwick* had run its course—indeed before he had finished writing it—Dickens was engaged upon the opening instalments of *Oliver Twist*, which ran in *Bentley* from February 1837 till early in 1839, when he relinquished the editorship of the magazine. While *Oliver Twist* was on the stocks he undertook a commission to write another story, to appear in parts, for Messrs. Chapman & Hall, and in April 1838 the opening chapters of *Nicholas Nickleby* were published.

It is worth mentioning that in the *Pickwick* year Dickens, who always had a strong liking for the theatre, twice tried his hand at writing for the stage. A farce of his called *The Strange Gentleman*, founded on one of the *Sketches*, was played at the St. James's Theatre with some success; and, a little later, a comic opera, *The Village Coquettes*, of which he wrote the libretto.

When, in 1839, he freed himself from the editorial cares of *Bentley*, he projected a weekly periodical, which was to be modelled more or less on Addison's *Spectator*. It was to consist of stories, essays and miscellaneous papers; he was to edit it and write the greater part of the contents. He did not intend that it should include a serial story; by that means he would give himself relief from the press of work that serial publication had entailed during the preceding three years. He came to an arrangement with his publishers, and in April 1840 the first number of *Master Humphrey's Clock*, as the periodical was called, was issued.

The public welcomed the first number as it would welcome anything from its favourite, but the sale steadily diminished as it was realised that *Master Humphrey's Clock* contained no continuous story by

Dickens. The public was master of the situation, and Dickens was shrewd enough to see that he must give it what it wanted. Consequently in the fourth number the first instalment of *The Old Curiosity Shop* appeared, and the story by degrees monopolised the whole of the *Clock*. It ran till January 1841, and was succeeded by *Barnaby Rudge*. When that in its turn came to an end at the close of the year, the *Clock* ceased to exist.

Before that took place Dickens had, in the summer of 1841, paid a memorable visit to Edinburgh. Lord Jeffrey's admiration for Dickens, and, in particular, for Little Nell of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, had taken the practical form of securing an invitation to her creator to a banquet to be given in his honour by the chief citizens of Edinburgh. The freedom of the city was conferred on him, and he was fêted and praised in a way that might well have turned the head of an older man; but Dickens, who was not yet thirty, came safely through the dangers, protected by the absolute sincerity which was one of his strongest characteristics. He was proud and glad of the appreciation of his work, but he cared very little for personal adulation; and it was with a perfectly genuine sentiment that he wrote from Edinburgh to his friend Forster: "The moral of this is, that there is no place like home, and that I thank God most heartily for having given me a quiet spirit and a heart that won't hold many people".

A few months after this Dickens set off with his wife for a visit to America. What it was that made him eager to go cannot be said with any certainty. He did not want to leave his friends, "how he was to get on for seven or eight months without them" he could not imagine; nor did he set any undue store by the personal reception that was unmistakeably waiting for him in

America. The explanation is probably to be found in the restlessness that was becoming more and more marked in him, together with the novelist's natural desire for fresh scenes and new experiences; perhaps a little, too, in the desire to see the great republic in which he—the foe of all injustice and oppression—hoped to find the embodiment of justice and liberty. His reception there was an overwhelming exaggeration of that which had met him at Edinburgh. At first it carried him away, and his impressions of the American people were roseate in hue. By degrees an inevitable reaction took place in his feelings, due a little to disappointment at not finding his ideals realised, and probably a great deal due to sheer physical fatigue at what he had to go through. "It is of no use," he wrote home to Macready, "I *am* disappointed. This is not the republic I came to see; this is not the republic of my imagination." The extravagances of a certain section of the American press disgusted him, and the trials to which a curiosity, which he thought impertinent, subjected his desire for privacy irritated him; and the result was some injudicious utterances in his *American Notes*, and more particularly in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (which he wrote immediately after his return), that were afterwards deplored by him and frankly repudiated.

A delightful picture is given by his daughter of his delight at his return home, "when a hackney coach rattled up to the door of the house in Devonshire Street, and four little folk, two girls and two boys, were hurried down and kissed through the bars of the gate, because their father was too eager to wait till it was opened". His sympathy and tenderness with his children was unbounded. None of their concerns

were too small to interest him ; none of their pleasures complete without him. Never were there such magic-lantern shows, such conjuring, or such captivating domestic theatricals as he devised for them. "There was dancing, too, and the little ones taught him his steps, which he practised with much assiduity, once even jumping out of bed in terror lest he had forgotten the polka, and indulging in a solitary midnight rehearsal."

He divided his life at this time mainly between the Devonshire Street house and the well-known house that stands so prominently over the little harbour at Broadstairs. The latter had become his favourite resort as a relief from town, and from it he loved to indulge in expeditions with his best friends, expeditions where the fun became boisterous and the laughter hilarious as Dickens gave the rein to the high spirits that never deserted him. In a letter to an American friend, written soon after his return to England, he gives an enthusiastic account of the attractions of his seaside retreat, and an amusing catalogue of its sights and sounds ; from the famous Goodwin Sands, "whence floating lights perpetually wink after dark, as if they were carrying on intrigues with the servants," to the Reading Rooms, where "old gentlemen and ancient ladies flirt after their own manner," ending with a description of a "bay-window in a one-pair," where sits, "from nine o'clock to one, a gentleman with rather long hair and no neckcloth, who writes and grins, as if he thought he were very funny indeed. His name is Boz."

In January 1843 the first number of *Martin Chuzzlewit* was ready for publication. Although it is undeniably one of the best of his novels, and one containing

many of his oftenest quoted passages, the public for some reason did not take so kindly to it as to his recent books. Dickens had put a great deal of work into it and was naturally disappointed, not only at its comparative want of success, but also at the consequent result that its smaller sales meant a considerable drop in his income. His publishers were dissatisfied, and he became nervous at the thought of a possible lapse of his popularity. Moreover, large as his income had been, he had been living fully up to it ; so he determined to go abroad in the winter, and endeavour to economise by living for a while on the Continent. He settled in Genoa, first of all in "a kind of pink jail" in a suburb of the town, and later in a larger house in Genoa itself, where, except for a flying visit to England in the winter of 1844, he remained till the summer of 1845. Before he started he had published the first of his "Christmas Books," the *Christmas Carol*, which he followed up in the winter of 1844 with *The Chimes*.

He returned to England in 1845 to find the country in the throes of political excitement over the Corn Law agitation, and, with his usual impetuosity, determined to enter the lists as a champion of justice. This he considered he could best do through the press, and accordingly made out a scheme for a new daily paper of which he was to be editor. It was, to quote his prospectus, "to be kept free from personal influence or party bias, and to be devoted to the advocacy of all rational and honest means by which wrong may be redressed, just rights maintained, and the happiness and welfare of society promoted". The newspaper was the *Daily News*. Its life began on 21st January, 1846, and Dickens remained editor for exactly a fortnight. Editorial work of this kind was so obviously

unsuitable to him that it is not surprising that he soon gave it up; our chief interest in his connection with the paper is the fact that his *Pictures from Italy*, his impressions of life in the south, first appeared in its columns.

From the summer of 1846 to the spring of 1847 he was again abroad, first at Lausanne and afterwards in Paris. *Dombey and Son* (or rather, its opening chapters, for the story occupied him during the whole of 1847) was the result of these months. Its success was enormous from the first, convincing Dickens that his life was best devoted to fiction, and so completely reassuring him as to his position that he felt justified, soon after his return home, in arranging for a cheap edition of his collected writings.

The publication of *David Copperfield* (whose first part appeared in May 1849) was the crowning event of Dickens' career. Not only is it, when judged as a whole, the most complete of his books, in construction, in humour and in pathos; it has, over and above this, a direct appeal possessed by few other of his works by reason of its extreme reality. The pathos is more genuine, the humour more intrinsic to the characters and less of an external garnish, than anywhere else in his works; in a word, there is more of the real Dickens in it than in any of the others. It came the more from his heart as, in the pitiful account of little David's drudgery in London, Dickens, as we now know, drew on his own memories of days whose experiences he had hitherto kept absolutely secret. He was scarcely able to write of them, even in this fictional form and after the interval of years, without suffering; but he did so with the honest purpose of exciting compassion for every such neglected childhood as his had been. Years after-

wards he wrote to Forster that, to be quite sure he had fallen into no unconscious repetition, he had been re-reading *David Copperfield*, and "was affected by it to a degree you would hardly believe

The next seven or eight years of his life were without much incident save such as came in the course of ceaseless hard work. Unfortunately, his health grew less and less good at the same time. The robust, cheery, boyish man was overtaken by frequent attacks of restless irritability. He had evidently overworked himself, and the extent to which he had identified himself with the sentiment or the purpose of what he wrote had been the cause of a great strain upon his nervous system. The record of the work of these years begins with the institution of *Household Words*, which, with its successor *All the Year Round*, he edited till his death. In these *Hard Times*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Uncommercial Traveller*, and *Great Expectations* first appeared. *Bleak House* appeared in monthly parts from 1852 to 1853, and *Little Dorrit* from 1856 to 1857, and previously he had published a *Child's History of England*. In 1858 he wrote to Forster: "I am become incapable of rest. I am quite confident that I should rust, break and die if I spared myself. Much better to die doing."

He had additional reason for distress in the consciousness, which had gradually forced itself into a recognition that could not be denied, that incompatibility of disposition was making it impossible for him and his wife to live any longer together. Neither had any tangible ground of complaint against the other in the matter of conduct; but each irritated the other to a degree that made happiness out of the question. "Poor Catherine and I," he wrote to his confidant Forster, "are not made for each other, and there is no

help for it. It is not only that she makes me uneasy and unhappy, but that I make her so too, and much more so. . . . We are strangely ill-assorted for the bond there is between us." A little later he wrote: "It is all despairingly over;" and in May 1858 he and his wife, by mutual agreement, parted.

A little while before this he had bought Gad's Hill Place, a "grave red-brick house" on the rising ground between Rochester and Chatham. It stands on the locality of Falstaff's famous exploit in *Henry IV.*, and Dickens always declared that in the Chatham days of his earliest youth one of his dearest day-dreams had been to buy the house and live in it. He used it at first as a summer retreat, but after 1860 made his home there altogether. The property became his hobby, and he delighted in making alterations and improvements to it with a frequency that made "the very latest improvement at Gad's Hill" a standing joke amongst his friends.

He had made a private experiment, a year or two previously, with the "readings" from his works with which he made so remarkable a success in the last ten years of his life. His determination now to make a public trial of his powers in this direction was hastened by his growing desire for some absorbing form of activity that would occupy his thoughts and take him out of himself. The first set of readings was begun when he was in the thick of his domestic trouble. He was a born actor, and the care with which he prepared and rehearsed the readings, added to the great natural ability with which he delivered them, made them effective beyond his expectations. "A whole tragic, comic, heroic theatre visible, performing under one hat," was the opinion of Carlyle, who had been

"dragged out of his evening habitudes" to hear the readings at Hanover Rooms, and remained enchanted. The success of the experiment was complete; and between 1858 and 1870 four series were delivered in England and one (in 1863) in Paris. In an interval between two of the series, from 1864 to 1865, *Our Mutual Friend* appeared.

Unfortunately for Dickens' health, which was already undermined by the effect of a severe shock received in a railway accident in 1865, he agreed to go in the winter of 1867 to America to give a series of readings there. The voyage to Boston at first did him good; but very soon the strain of the readings, combined with the constant journeying over great distances, completely broke him down. He could not sleep at night and wore himself out by day, and, as a friend who saw him there said, only a man of iron will could have accomplished what he did.

His store of vitality enabled him to revive wonderfully on the return voyage. "I had not been at sea three days," he wrote when he came back, "when I became myself again," and the letter gives an amusing account of his indignation "when a 'deputation'—two in number, of whom only one could get into my cabin, while the other looked in at my window—came to ask me to read to the passengers that night in the saloon. I respectfully replied that sooner than do it I would assault the captain and be put in irons."

The improvement, however, was only temporary. In 1869 the doctors imperatively forbade railway travelling in connection with the readings; and in the spring of 1870, after a visit "by command" to the Queen at Buckingham Palace, he gave a farewell series in London and retired to Gad's Hill.

The early summer there was made happy by the visits of troops of friends ; but Dickens had become, as he unwillingly admitted, "for the first time in his life uncertain of voice and sight and tread and touch, and dull of spirit," and even the stimulus of the country and his favourite walks did him little good. Still he worked, having begun upon a new novel, but the last effort was too much for him. He literally "died doing," as he had told Forster he hoped to do ; for the end came very suddenly, and after only a few hours' warning he passed away on the evening of the 9th of June, 1870, leaving his last book, *Edwin Drood*, unfinished.

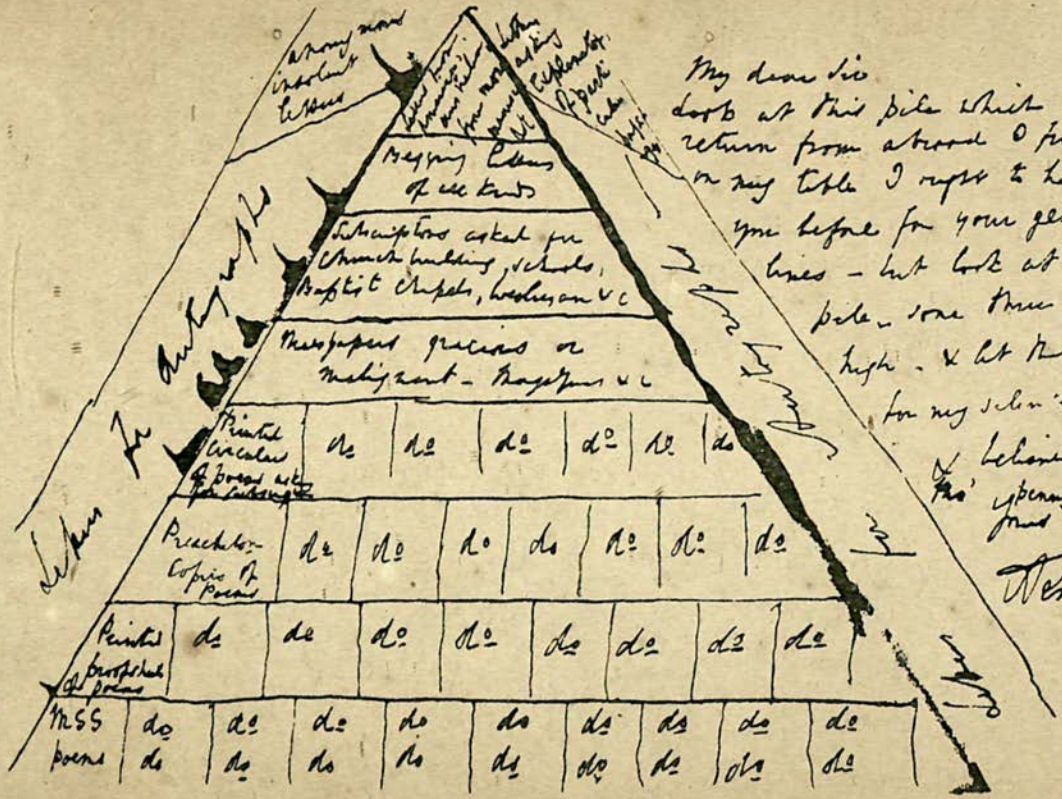
A few days later he was buried in Westminster Abbey ; but, as he expressly requested in his will, without any attempt at publicity or ostentation.

XXIV.

TENNYSON.

ALFRED TENNYSON was born in his father's rectory at Somersby, a sleepy little Lincolnshire village, on 6th August, 1809. He was one of a family of twelve, all imaginative children, and even fonder, perhaps, than most children of games of "make believe" and the invention of wonderful tales of adventure. Alfred, who came fourth amongst them in age, was the most reliable in this last respect; his tales of knight-errantry, where dragons in vain threatened lovely maidens and valorous heroes fought triumphantly with Indians or demons, were in great request among his younger brothers and sisters. He inherited a powerful physique and wide artistic tastes from his father, who was a man of much culture; probably, too, it was to his father that he owed the tendency to moroseness and a brusque gruffness that in his manhood was apt to obscure (to those who did not know him well) the tenderness of heart in which he recalled his mother.

Although he began to make verses very soon, and before his childhood was out had determined to be a poet and nothing else, he was not a precocious boy; nor was he, as a child, considered by any means the cleverest of the family. His elder brother Charles was thought to show far more promise. Alfred was rather quiet and retiring; "a very gentle nature," says one


My dear Sir
look at this pile which on my
return from abroad I first dusted
on my table I ought to have thanked
you before for your generous
lines – but look at the
pile – some three feet
high – & let that apologize
for my silence –
Believe me
Yrs sincerely but saddened
Alfred Tenn
Tennyson

ALFRED TENNYSON, LORD TENNYSON.

Facsimile (slightly reduced) of a Letter to W. C. Bennett. (Brit. Mus., Egerton MS. 2,805, f. 1.)

[*Face page* 314.

of his brothers; "I never remember quarrelling with him". He was a great reader, and would have his book in hand even when rambling in the Lincolnshire lanes, where reading was supplemented by bird's-nesting, and the sights and sounds of nature produced a deeper effect on the boy's mind than the printed page.

When he was seven he was sent to school at Louth, having been given his choice between that and going to sea. "How I did hate that school!" he afterwards said; "the only good I ever got from it was the memory of the words '*sonus desilientis aquæ*,' and of an old wall covered with wild weeds opposite the school windows." His son tells us that to his dying day Tennyson remembered sitting on the stone steps of the school, on a cold winter's morning, crying bitterly after being cuffed on the head by a bigger lad because he was a new boy. The schoolmaster, after the manner of his day, believed firmly in the educational power of a thrashing, and was as zealous with the birch as with his books. Altogether it was a most acceptable relief to the boy when, after he had been four years there, his father decided to have him at home and give him his teaching himself.

That this was good for a boy who was by temperament inclined to solitariness is doubtful. Had he been sent to a public school he would probably have lost much of the self-consciousness that was apt in after life to make him appear too self-centred. Selfish he never was; to that his children, and those who knew him best, testify; his heart was full of generous sympathy; but he was almost morbidly sensitive, and, all his life, took himself and his calling with a seriousness that was not, indeed, unjustified, but might have been the better

of a leaven of that consideration for the thoughts and ways of others that is only learnt by unhindered contact with them.

As far as education went, however, Tennyson had nothing to regret of the years between his leaving Louth and his going to Cambridge. His father was a man of varied talents; while he allowed his sons a good deal more leisure than falls to the lot of most boys, he turned their minds towards a number of interests with which to employ it. Alfred, with his brother Charles (who was at home with him), gained in this way no mean knowledge of languages, mathematics, music and drawing, as well as an enthusiastic love for nature, and a habit of putting his thoughts into words that soon became a constant striving after poetic expression. The three brothers—for Frederick, the eldest, had much the same tastes—were continually writing verse; and when, one day early in 1827, it occurred to them that their scanty pocket-money would be pleasantly increased if they could induce some bookseller to buy and print their verses, they found that in their combined store of poems they had a handsome bulk to select from. They made their choice of about a hundred, and were fortunate enough to find a publisher at once. Mr. Jackson of Louth offered them £20 for the copyright, and they accepted the offer with alacrity, to find, however, that they were obliged to take half the sum in books from Mr. Jackson's shop. Ten pounds, however, seemed wealth to them; the book was printed, and in March 1827 the little volume appeared, with the title of *Poems by Two Brothers*. It was practically the work of Charles and Alfred Tennyson, though Frederick, the eldest brother, was responsible for four of the poems in it. It appears to have obtained only one press notice,

which, however, speaks of it as containing "several little pieces of considerable merit".

In the following year the two young poets went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, where their elder brother had already distinguished himself. Alfred's shyness prevented his making friends rapidly, but by degrees he became intimate with some of the most remarkable young men of his year. The little group that used, in the old college rooms, so eagerly to discuss

> Mind and art,
> And labour, and the changing mart,
> And all the framework of the land,

included Monckton-Milnes, Alford, Merivale, R. C. Trench, Brookfield, and Arthur Hallam—the dearest friend of Tennyson's youth and the inspirer of *In Memoriam*—of whom Tennyson said that he was "as near perfection as mortal man could be". Tennyson was keenly interested in the university course of studies, and worked hard; but neither this nor any other interest was allowed to oust poetry from the first place in his affections, as he showed by his success in winning the Prize Poem in 1829. *Timbuctoo*, his poem, marked an innovation, being written in blank verse, whereas the rhymed couplet had become the regulation metre for such compositions.

The praise that this received encouraged him to publish, a year later, a slim volume of *Poems, chiefly Lyrical*. Tennyson had wished it to contain poems by his friend Hallam, as well as his own; to be a record of their mutual friendship, just as the *Lyrical Ballads* of Coleridge and Wordsworth had been of theirs. Hallam's father was opposed to the plan, so it was allowed to drop, and Tennyson's verses appeared alone. They attracted a good deal of attention, for

there was obvious originality in them ; and if some readers were puzzled by their unusual freedom in the matter of metre, this was more than compensated for by a depth of feeling and a width of outlook remarkable for so young a writer. They seemed, as one of his critics said, to combine Wordsworth's thoughtful love of nature with a sense of verbal melody that suggested Shelley or Keats. At any rate, here was a poet that was to some extent a thinker as well.

Tennyson left Cambridge in 1831 without a degree, called back to the Somersby rectory by his father's failing health. The latter died a month later, and the poet had to decide about his future. The matter needed little deliberation ; for he had never wavered, since he was a boy, in his resolution to become a famous poet. He decided, rather than distract his thoughts from poetry by embarking on any other career, to "club together" with his mother and sisters and so live on the small patrimony he inherited. The new rector of Somersby did not wish to occupy the rectory at once, so the family were enabled to lease it from him, and remained there till 1837.

These six years were eventful for Tennyson. First of all, after two or three poems contributed to periodicals, came the publication, in December, 1832, of a second volume of *Poems*. Amongst these were "The Lady of Shalott," "Œnone," "The Miller's Daughter" and "A Dream of Fair Women," to mention but a few of those whose fame is familiar. The poems met with eager praise at some hands and violent abuse at others. Their sale was rapid, for poetry. So much were they to the taste of the younger generation that the question "whether Tennyson or Milton was the greater poet" was debated at the Cambridge Union ; while on the other

hand the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood* attacked them with a savagery that deeply wounded the poet, and no doubt had much to do with the fact that ten years passed before he faced the ordeal of publication again.

A few months afterwards, Arthur Hallam's death completely prostrated Tennyson with grief. The friendship between them had been singularly close, and had begotten an interdependence of their natures that made the separation doubly painful. Hallam was to have become bound even closer to Tennyson by marriage with his sister, thus more than the poet were plunged into grief at his untimely death. For many years memories of his friend—"the only man before whom I bow in conscious inferiority in everything," Tennyson had said—came before all else in his mind. Some of the detached verses in which he expressed his love and sorrow were incorporated in the beautiful elegy that was published seventeen years later.

A third important event, to Tennyson, of these years at Somersby was the marriage (in 1836) of his brother Charles to Miss Sellwood, for whose sister Emily the poet conceived a strong attachment. Fourteen years later Emily Sellwood became his wife, the state of Tennyson's fortunes making the delay necessary; but there was at any rate an informal engagement made between them soon after her sister's marriage. The poet's personal appearance about this time is described as: "Six feet high, broad chested, strong limbed; his face Shakespearian, with deep eyelids; his forehead ample, crowned with dark wavy hair; his head finely poised; his hand the admiration of sculptors, long fingers and square tips, soft as a child's but of great length. What struck one most about him was the union of strength

with refinement." His disposition was strongly affectionate ; but his shyness, together with his independence of nature, made his manner appear somewhat gruff. Speaking of him in a letter written in 1832, Hallam says : " His nervous temperament and habits of solitude give an appearance of affectation to his manner which is no true interpretation of the man, and wears off on further knowledge ".

Fitzgerald, writing to a friend in 1838, gives us another glimpse of him : " We have had Alfred Tennyson here, very droll and very wayward ; and much sitting up of nights till two or three in the morning, with pipes in our mouths ; at which good hour we would get Alfred to give us some of his magic music, which he does between growling and smoking, and so to bed ".

As Tennyson recovered by degrees from the gloom which had overtaken him at Hallam's death, he worked more and more earnestly at his poetry, and by the year 1842 he had written enough to furnish material for a new volume. Accordingly in that year a two-volume collection of *Poems* appeared. The first of these consisted mainly of a selection from the poems contained in the two earlier volumes, many of them having been rewritten ; the second was composed of new matter, and included, amongst others, " Locksley Hall," " The Gardener's Daughter," " Morte d'Arthur," " The Two Voices " and " Sir Galahad ".

There was no indecision about the reception of these volumes. They literally took the reading world by storm, and their undeniable qualities even wrung a generous recantation from the *Quarterly Review*. Tennyson's name was in every one's mouth, and his success great and sudden enough to have disturbed the equa-

nimity of any but a man of so reserved a disposition. He was now unmistakeably recognised as the greatest poet of his day, and the knowledge was accepted by him with dignified seriousness. As years went on he became unduly sensitive of adverse criticism ; but this was balanced by an equally pronounced dislike of "gush". He was his own severest critic, and probably estimated his own position, and the value of his work, with complete justice.

Unfortunately, though in six years the *Poems* went through four editions, this result could improve the poet's financial position but little, for all his patrimony had been lost in an ill-advised investment. Then followed, as his son tells us, a season of real hardship, and marriage seemed farther off than ever. Fortunately in 1845 his friends succeeded in pressing his claim to a Civil List Pension, by which means £200 a year was secured to him. This encouragement roused him from a state of depression into which he had fallen ; and two years later he published *The Princess*.

It was about this time that he became intimate with Carlyle, who came to love him so well as to call him his "soul's brother". Carlyle has left a characteristic description of the poet that may well be set beside the earlier pictures given above. "A great shock of rough, dusty-dark hair ; bright, laughing hazel eyes ; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate ; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian-looking ; clothes cynically loose, free and easy ; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musically metallic . . . speech and speculation free and plenteous ; I do not meet, in these late decades, such company over a pipe."

The publication of *In Memoriam*, in 1850, was the

turning-point of Tennyson's life. So intimately was his reverent love for Hallam's memory bound up with every line of it, that he had at first intended to print the poem only for private circulation. The remonstrances of his friends prevailed, however, and it was published anonymously. Its authorship soon became an open secret; and a direct result of the admiration *In Memoriam* evoked was Tennyson's appointment as Poet Laureate, in succession to Wordsworth, the poet Rogers having declined the post on the score of age. In the same year, too, Tennyson's publisher felt justified in guaranteeing him an income upon which the poet felt that marriage would be possible; and accordingly, on 13th June 1850, Tennyson and Emily Sellwood were married. It is no impertinence to quote what his son tells us Tennyson used to say of the happiness of this marriage: "The peace of God came into my life when I wedded her".

His first official ode as Laureate was that written on the death of the Duke of Wellington in 1852. Its cold reception, which was a disappointment to Tennyson, was due partly to the ode's unconventionality of form, partly, too, to the fact that, like most great poets, Tennyson did not write well "to order". It was very different with the spontaneity of inspiration that found its vent in the stirring "Charge of the Light Brigade" that appeared, one December morning in 1854, in the *Examiner*.

In the following summer Tennyson went to Oxford to receive the honorary degree of D.C.L. amidst the greatest enthusiasm on the part of the undergraduates. A few months later he published *Maud*, a poem (or rather, lyrical dramatic monologue) that has probably been more discussed than any of his writings, and at

the time of its appearance completely puzzled a large number of his readers. The latter's equanimity was restored, and their affection and admiration renewed, when, in the autumn of 1859, the first series of *Idylls of the King* appeared. Tennyson had long had an affection for the Arthurian legends as poetic subjects, and the success of the *Idylls* was very welcome to him. The full tide of his popularity began with their appearance, and was never checked afterwards. The *Idylls* grew gradually into the shape in which Tennyson left them at his death. The original series of 1859 comprised only four, that of 1869 eight, and the later editions twelve. The full appreciation of them by the public was to some extent as gradual of growth. The blank verse at first disappointed those who had come to look for the mere music of poetry from Tennyson, and had not discerned the thinker under the poet ; by degrees, however, the *Idylls* were recognised as the work most characteristic of him, and the nobility of their conception as fully recognised as the dexterity of their execution.

His life now became one of quiet industry in his art, lightened by the visits of congenial friends and by occasional travel ; marked, too, by an ever-growing dislike of personal publicity and disinclination to encounter strangers. He had, some years previously, bought the property of Farringford, in the Isle of Wight ; and between this and the house he subsequently built for himself at Aldworth, near Haslemere, he made his home for the rest of his life. Latterly he inclined more to the Aldworth home, as better able to give him a privacy which the increasing number of visitors to the Isle of Wight seemed to him to threaten at Farringford.

Enoch Arden, in 1864, was followed by the volume entitled *The Holy Grail* in 1869; and that by *Gareth and Lynette* in 1872. In 1875 he made a new departure with his blank-verse drama, *Queen Mary*, an adapted version of which was produced at the Lyceum Theatre by Henry Irving in April 1876. A public which has lost the taste for reading the poetic drama received the acted play with more approbation than the book. *Queen Mary* was succeeded after the lapse of a year by another drama, *Harold*, which was not acted. Two smaller dramas in verse, *The Falcon* and *The Cup*, were successfully produced within the next few years; the former, which Mrs. Kemble described as "an exquisite little poem in action," at the St. James's in the winter of 1879, the latter at the Lyceum in 1881. These were printed together in 1884; and in the same year was published *Becket*, which, nine years later, was produced with signal success by Henry Irving. Tennyson's only attempt at a play of modern life was made in the ill-starred *Promise of May*, a village tragedy whose central figure is that of a shallow philosopher, who is a sensualist and a man defiant of any religious principle. The author's purpose was probably misunderstood; but the *technique* of the play is as faulty as its sentiment is unpalatable, and would alone have been sufficient to lead to the failure it experienced on its production at the Globe Theatre in 1882.

Meanwhile, in 1880, the Laureate had published a volume of *Ballads, and other Poems*, whose form and manner in many ways suggests the temporary leaning of the poet's mind towards the drama. The varied collection entitled *Tiresias* (1885) includes examples of his widely differing styles—the purely lyrical, the philosophical, the narrative, and the intensely dramatic. In

1886 *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* appeared, and with this was printed *The Promise of May*. One more collection of poems was published in his lifetime. This was *Demeter*, which appeared in 1889, a volume memorable as containing the exquisite "Crossing the Bar". At the time of his death, three years later, he was engaged on the preparation of still another volume, which, under the title of *The Death of Œnone*, was posthumously published in 1892.

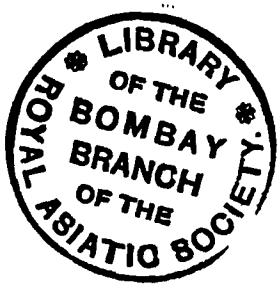
In his eighty-third year Tennyson made another experiment in drama, this time with the happiest results. He completed for the American manager, Mr. Daly, a pastoral play (begun some years previously, and laid aside) on the subject of Robin Hood and Maid Marian. *The Foresters*, as it was called in its finished state, has been rightly described as a charming woodland masque. It is full of the atmosphere of the pure country and a life of chivalrous freedom; a medley rather than a play, but a medley of fascinating materials, worked together with a freshness of touch astonishing in a man of the poet's years. It was first produced in New York in March 1892, and afterwards by the same company in London.

In 1884 Tennyson accepted a peerage as Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Farringford. Ten years previously he had been offered a baronetcy, but had refused it; though had it been possible for him to accept it for his son alone, and not for himself, he would have done so. His distaste for the kind of publicity that the announcement of his peerage would bring with it made him hesitate in accepting the title until he was convinced that it was the Queen's wish that he should do so, and also, as he wrote to a friend, that it would be selfish were he to let his private feelings stand in the way of

an honour done (as Mr. Gladstone assured him it would be) to literature in his name.

From 1888 his health grew rapidly worse. One attack of illness followed another, though in the intervals his vitality enabled him to recuperate to an astonishing extent and to continue working to the very last. The "Lines on the Death of the Duke of Clarence" were written in 1892, the year of Tennyson's death; and when his last illness came on him he was busy correcting the proofs of the volume of poems that was published after his death with the title of *The Death of Œnone*.

By the summer of 1892 it was evident that the end was rapidly approaching, and on 6th October of that year he died peacefully in his room at Aldworth. A week later he was buried in Westminster Abbey with every mark of honour.



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